Bay
of
Biscay
Bordeaux
R. Dordogne
R. Garonne
Bazas
Agen
F
R
R. Adour
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Orthez
Biarritz
Fuenterrabia
Salies de Bearn
Gave de Pau
Bayonne
S. Sebastian
Pau
Mauléon
Tarbes
Oloron
Lourdes
Larunso
Pamplona
P du Midi d'Ossau
Ville Aure
Gavarnie
Jaca
R. Ebro
Mt. Perdu
Maladetta
A
Map to Illustrate
A WAYFARER
in the
PYRENEES
Lerida
R. Ebro
E. 28
J. Perman

R. Lot
Cahors
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A
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R. Tarn
Albi
Nimes
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Castres
Toulouse
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Cette
R. Garonne
Carcassonne
Narbonne
Gulf
of
Lyons
R. Aude
Foix
Perpignan
Villier
P. de Serrere
Montcalm
P. Carlitte
R. Tet
ANDORRA
Collioure
Port Vendres
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Thurlestone

July 1939.

A WAYFARER IN THE PYRENEES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR AND ARTIST

A WANDERER IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA
A WAYFARER ON THE LOIRE
A WAYFARER IN PROVENCE
A WAYFARER ON THE SEINE
A WAYFARER IN FRENCH VINEYARDS

CALLE MAYOR, FUENTERRABIA

A WAYFARER IN THE PYRENEES

BY

E. I. ROBSON

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY

J. R. E. HOWARD

AND A MAP

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PREFACE

THE Pyrenees here have been treated as a cross-word puzzle—I have described the downward valleys, and also the great lateral roads; there should not be much left out, but I do not attempt to note every little place, while I have been brief over the big places, which are better known, and have perhaps their own special guide-books. I have also given more stress to the eastern part of the range as being less known—but no less worthy of being known—than the western part.

There is ample literature on the Pyrenees and good bibliographies may be had. Pyrenean students may always find nurture in the local libraries. Mountaineering books stand in their own class; while I touch on the romance of mountaineering, I do not attempt to write for serious climbers. There are some interesting novels which have Pyrenean local colour; but these run a trifle too much to smuggling, which after all is only one of many Pyrenean activities.

I have inclined to some severity in my descriptions, having suffered somewhat from the rhapsodies of certain descriptive guides. But the mountains themselves and their foothills and valleys tell their own story best; and I may claim with Taine, "J'y suis allé (not once nor twice); c'est un mérite."

I owe many thanks to my old friend E. M. P. Boileau of Château Viaud on the Dordogne, not only for taking me over a great deal of ground—old ground, much of it, to correct and renew impressions—but also for letting me see his account of our journey and borrow some ideas; also to the Rev. P. E. T. Widdrington, who crossed into Andorra at a time when I cannot do so, that is, at the earliest possible moment in the season, and has allowed me to use and largely incorporate his notes.

E. I. R.

January 1929

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A WAYFARER IN THE PYRENEES

A WAYFARER IN THE PYRENEES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THERE are many books about the Pyrenees, French and English, and the excuse for more is that the Pyrenees, foothills, valleys, passes, heights, are inexhaustible. This present work has in view the ordinary tourist, who would be wise to read it not so much on the journey (where he will need his detailed guide-books), but before and after. Since a great majority of tourists still use the ordinary means of getting about, trains, public motor-diligences, autocars, occasional hired cars, and also (best of all) their own two feet, I do not pretend to speak specially to those who either motor throughout in their own cars or are professed mountaineers. For these there are special books. No one should tour the Pyrenees by car without reading Mr. C. L. Freeston's book (*Passes of the Pyrenees*), nor attempt to cross the passes on foot without much study of Mr. Hilaire Belloc (*The Pyrenees*). The ordinary tourist, moreover, while desiring, let us hope, to take an intelligent interest in his delightful surroundings, will not be a specialist, for then he cannot be ordinary. If he be a geographer, geologist, historian, philologist, or architect, he will find more than enough to

occupy him; but he should study the Pyrenees in special works (Mr. Belloc's book will help him in many ways, but he must do his chief studies in French). The architectural traveller will find enough to occupy him, even for a long visit, in his own line, especially in the western and extreme eastern sections; and he can read the studies of a brother architect in Mr. Hamilton Jackson's *Rambles in the Pyrenees* with much profit. This writer, however, may well be studied by the more serious-minded "ordinary" tourist, since he obviously possesses a keen power of observation, though oddly enough he sometimes misses, or at least does not emphasize, what would seem most certain to attract the trained mind. If I do not mention other books here, it is not because I have not studied them, but because they bring no special or peculiar contribution to the subject, or because, being in French (there are excellent historical and architectural studies), they are not available to everyone. But I make an exception of the capital handbook on the French Cerdagne by M. Brousse, which should encourage travellers to visit that district, even if they do not follow the author's footsteps so far as to view the very picturesque scenes and smell the very evil smells of a pilgrimage at Nuria on the Spanish side. A specialist whom I have not mentioned, but have not forgotten, is the gastronomical. He must go to France for his books, and will be concerned not so much with the Pyrenees themselves as their approaches; but if he is a serious student, and reads all he can find of M. Curnonsky, he will approach the range by the rather unusual route of Périgord, and thence to Bordeaux, or through Toulouse to Narbonne and Perpignan, and one may wonder if he will ever get to the mountains at all. Périgord is the home of truffles, *foie gras*, and of lard; its cooking is, as the witty M. Curnonsky puts it, *sans beurre et sans reproche*;

the Bordelais are experts in other ways; the Dordogne is the centre of the lamprey; the Garonne and Ariège of *confits de canard*; and the list of specialities to be found Narbonne and Perpignan way, even in the cold setting forth of the guide-books, will make the most inexpert mouth water. Not here is the place to speak of the formidable belts of wines to be fought through. But here let the traveller take heart; when he has passed through St. Émilion and worked his way along the Garonne, he must certainly finish up, for the dessert, in Roussillon, at Banyuls, and so he will get his glimpse of Canigou after all.

The plan of this book is based upon the various approaches to the Pyrenees, and the chief centres in the foothills will be described, with the fan-like radiations of the valleys to be best reached from each centre. The French side of the range (of which some geographical account will be given presently) is very much softer and gentler than the Spanish or sunny side. From the north one can penetrate southward, or southward-inclined, through a delicious galaxy of radiant valleys, until the time comes to ascend the pass, or until the way, pass-less, is barred by some gigantic *cirque*. The approach from the Spanish side, southward to north, is a different matter. The valleys are narrower and steeper, more tortuous, and they run into a bleaker and starker mountain barrier. On west and east there are approaches, and passes, but not many in between; there is a northwards way from Jaca, and from Ripoll and Seo d'Urgel; not a great many more. That is why when we speak of the Pyrenees we think chiefly of the French Pyrenees. Moreover, though the French side is the shady side, it is really sunny enough for most of us; and if we visit it in midsummer, it is an advantage to have certain defiles and clefts, such as the valley of St. Béat, which do not invite the sun's rays to spread as they

do in the broad vale of Luchon. This brings us to the question of times and seasons. When should we go to the Pyrenees? My own time is in advance of the English season—at the end of March—when one will, indeed, get cold, even icy winds, and perhaps a hailstorm or two; when many passes will be still impassable; but when hotel-keepers will be glad to see you, and when the green peas and asparagus of Perpignan are at least imminent, with the cuckoos and nightingales, and the mosquitoes are still at some little distance (though they find me out fairly early in April). The English season opens about mid-April in some parts and in May in others. About July the French and Spaniards begin to come in, but there are plenty of our countrymen still about, since many of the autocar services are just beginning to run in June, and the great "Route of the Pyrenees" service opens only about the third week in June (June 21st in 1926). Besides this, all motorists who wish to ascend the higher roads must, of course, do so in summer only. Mr. Freeston tells them rightly that the higher you go the better the scenery, the more bracing the air, and (as a rule) the better the road. But the plains are to be traversed first; and the photographs in Mr. Freeston's book show a very pitiless sun blazing down, and he is quite honest about the dust. Those then who do not mind heat (and mosquitoes among the foothills), and who will risk finding a good deal of accommodation taken up by the French (who, after all, own one side of the Pyrenees) and the Spanish (who own the other), will be quite happy in the summer if they go as high as they can get. Those who take the "Route des Pyrénées" service will find sleeping accommodation at the big hotels at which the autocars stop. I cannot speak of the cost; no doubt inclusive tickets are issued; but I have traversed most of the route by other means and not in the summer, when one

could enjoy the magnificence of the hotels at a reasonable rate. My own impression (at least on my most recent visit) is that prices, as a whole, range high even from the beginning of April; but if one avoids the obvious tourist hotels one can feed excellently, and as a rule sleep most comfortably, for a moderate sum. Here, however, a delicate question arises, which distant correspondents put to me when planning their tours. What about the "sanitary accommodation" (as we usually term it)? The answer is that in the usual tourist hotels, and in all marked T.C.F., you can generally be safe; but in the crowded season, or in the more outlying (and therefore more interesting) places, you should be prepared for anything, and should certainly take with you packets of paper handkerchiefs and other toilet requisites and auxiliaries, and a small but vigorous electric torch. While on sanitary subjects, I would urge all French hotelkeepers to be more than ever punctilious in matters of this kind; they cannot overdo cleanliness. Also (this is a minor matter) I beg all who are putting in hot and cold water taps and proper lavatory basins in the rooms not to have that irritating little glass shelf placed so that any energetic and conscientious washer will bang, and possibly cut, his head at intervals. Let it be placed at the side, where it will be equally useful and quite harmless.

No doubt to very many people to go "to the Pyrenees" means going to Bordeaux, Pau, and thence probably to the Cauterets valley. Some others make for Luchon through Toulouse. Many only "nibble" the ends of the range when going to Spain. But there are other ways in; and rash though it may seem, to avoid the obvious is a sound rule of travel. Even Bordeaux can be reached by the slightly adventurous routes of the Bay of Biscay, from St. Malo through Nantes, a far from uninteresting journey, with La Rochelle and Saintes on the way; through Chartres, which

you can reach by Dieppe and Rouen (though you should inquire about this first), and then through Saumur, Niort, and Saintes; while if you start from Paris, you can still go the less direct, but slightly delectable, route through Périgueux, whose cathedral is one of the most remarkable in France.[1] From Bordeaux you may go by Morceux to Tarbes, or through Dax to Pau, or by Bayonne along the Toulouse line, branching south at Puyoo or Pau, Lourdes, Tarbes, or elsewhere till you reach Boussens; or you may, indeed, go south-east from Bayonne at once. Or from Bordeaux you may follow the line south-easterly to Agen, and thence south to Auch; and you can equally reach Agen and Auch by Périgueux. Then there is the ordinary Paris–Toulouse line, with its southward extensions to Aulus and (through Foix) to Ax; and bold spirits may even venture from Paris through St. Flour to Béziers and there join the entrance from the east through Narbonne. Now the usual traveller will at once say: "Let me get into something quick and direct at Paris and get near my destination as quick as I can." But let him also reflect that if he travels from Paris by night—as most people will—if he is luxurious and comfortable, it does not very much matter where he gets to; but if he is economical and uncomfortable, he will not much care where the morning finds him, provided it brings a wash and comforting coffee. The Périgueux–Agen–Auch route appeals to me as less crowded and as taking one straight into the middle of the range. This route will no doubt become a more popular one when the line from Auch to Lannemezan, with its existing extension to Arreau, is working. Two other new lines, Oloron–Jaca–Saragossa[2] and Oust–Sort–Lérida, will enable travellers to

[1] And whose cooking—— (But a footnote does not permit raptures. Try the *Commerce*.)

[2] An engine has passed through the tunnel early in the year without being entombed, and the actual opening ceremony, by the President of the Republic, took place in July (1928).

Spain to go through the range and not necessarily round it, and so will open up great possibilities of stopping at very fascinating places on the way. The Ax–Ripoll–Barcelona line will make a third Transpyrenean route. The chapters of this book will deal with the various "taking-off" places in their order from west to east, and the valleys to which they lead. More stress will be laid on the valleys east to Cauterets, as being, no doubt, rather less known. Travellers will (or should) be grateful if they are attracted to the Cerdagne and Roussillon.

Of books about the Pyrenees we have seen there are plenty. But some need special mention. Early books mostly deal with the Western Pyrenees, perhaps coming as far east as Luchon. Recent writers make more of the Eastern Pyrenees, the Cerdagne, and the Roussillon plain. Among older French books, that of M. Taine naturally claims respect; it glistens with good descriptions and neat aphorisms; but though M. Taine tells us he has "been there," his digressive powers are such that it would seem as if he wished to conceal the reality of his experiences, as something to be ashamed of. Moreover, as M. Taine lays so much emphasis upon the rain and mist of the Western Pyrenees, he hardly seems to wish to attract us thither at all. His description of Paul's ascent of the Pic du Midi reads like an extract from Mark Twain, "featuring" Harris. "Third hour: the view improves. Hind view of two horses and two coats of tourists, fifteen feet ahead of us. They swear, and so do I: we find it consoling. . . . Fourth hour. Hurrah! the guide promises me a fine view of the sea of mists from the top. . . . Arrival. View of the sea of mists. Unhappily we are in one of the mists. It looks like the steam of a vapour bath when you're in the bath. . . . Beneficial results; cold in my head, rheumatism in my feet, lumbago, congestion," etc.

Then Gustave Doré's pictures are so filled with the Spirit

of Inferno that any timid reader might take them rather too literally and be scared from even the foothills by the gloomy woods, from the valleys by the representations of horrid crocodiles and dinosaurs, and from the peaks by the awful cinema-like pictures of people falling starfish-wise from dizzy ascents towards impossible snow-heights. And M. Doré is thoroughly drenched with the humidity which so damped M. Taine. The picture of Eaux-Bonnes (a great mass of umbrellas) would scare anyone away. I do not therefore recommend Taine's *Pyrénées* to any intending tourist, though much has changed since 1858 (not, perhaps, the character of English tourists, at least as seen by French eyes); but I do urge travellers to read it on their safe return. There are also excellent old English travel-books, which increase our admiration for our grand- and great-grandparents, whom we see climbing impossible clefts and riding mules up precipitous steeps. We read, moreover, of heroic encounters, not indeed with brigands, but with muleteers who go back on most solemn contracts, treat them in fact as scraps of paper, and in the tightest places endeavour to make new ones at greatly enhanced rates. Need we say that paterfamilias, for all his pegtop trousers, his complete ignorance of any tongue but his own, and his trembling bevy of female supporters, comes out always victoriously—or shall we say Victorianly?—from these threatening situations? Travel was travel in those days. Here is a short account of one of these books. As we travel to-day let us read them all with shame and admiration.

It is called *Roadside Sketches*, by Three Wayfarers, 1859. It is a good travel-book, instinct with the right spirit. They *did* travel, in the days of Dundreary whiskers and pegtop trousers. The women threw off their megrims, while retaining their odd (if picturesque) frocks and hats, mounted doubtful-looking mules, and headed for the unknown.

The principal person, with bad French and no Spanish, reduced to penitential tears grasping muleteers, who in dark defiles did a "quick change" from muleteer to brigand. These heroic great-grandparents of ours crossed the Channel on what were known as "packets"—we can see them in Turner's pictures—and the first illustration in the text of our book is "a sea-sick Frenchman," who might do for the sea-sick of any nationality.

Once ashore, these wayfarers are loud in praise of the French railway system and its safety. The party, or a similar party, for the account is a little confused, visits Chambord, with a one-horse vehicle (the S.P.C.A. had apparently not got going in those days), four within, and two lying full length on the roof. The travellers are intensely interested in their French fellow-travellers, the evils of clericalism, country coifs and head-dresses, and cognac. In the Landes there were still men on stilts, but few pine-trees. Biaritz had then only one *r*, and few great hotels; but the Basque country seems to have been fairly well developed for tourist traffic, though a very large proportion of the tourists were melancholy invalids. From Eaux Chaudes (quite small still, not more than a dozen houses of any size) the adventurous wayfarers, with a written contract with the muleteer in their pockets, set out for Panticosa; are much troubled by mosquitoes (even on the top of the ridge), and arrive at the "dirty village" of Panticosa safe and triumphant. Here they stay in a sort of barracks in comparative comfort. Most wisely, having no love for Spanish cooking, they lay in a stock of provisions (carried no doubt by a mule), a "small roast leg of mountain mutton, a smoked ham, a Bologna sausage, and as much as you can carry of Xéres or Valdepenas wine."

I feel I should like to have met these wayfarers. They show, once and again, "the dogged resistance and pluck

natural to an Englishman who conceives that there is an intention of fraud." They get as far as Jacca, which has an extra *c* to make up for Biaritz's lost *r*. They naturally visit Gavarni (which loses an *e*), ploughing (in most inconvenient clothes) through thick snows, from the Spanish side, and in the *cirque* (strangest thing of all) they find solitude. They are duly interested in Cagots, of which families are still to be found, and they finish up by Marseilles and the Rhone. Heroic souls!

One of these early Pyrenean authors, J. Hardy, *A Picturesque Tour in the High Pyrenees*, has, through excessive adherence to his authority, *L'Itinéraire des Hautes Pyrénées*, been led into an error against which I warn those who are weak in the French tongue. He reports that near Lourdes (of all places) "is a lake said to be of poisonous quality." The original document does not go so far; it only says that there is something fishy about the lake.

A book on the Basque country by Pierre Loti is quite sure to be a marvel of local colour, and *Ramuntcho* does not fail us. There is no story or plot worth the name; but round this absence of plot is woven a delightful tissue of all that is most Basque. The book opens with autumn curlews on the Bidassoa, but it takes us into the glare of a Basque summer with hot pelota-frontons, chirping crickets, lazy lizards, and fandangos by moonlight. There is smuggling (on the Bidassoa, how can one avoid it?), there is churchgoing, in the Basque fashion, women below, men aloft; a funeral party, in long cloaks and hoods; but there is no mention of the little memorial candles burning here and there on the floor of the church. There are Basque songs, legends, improvisators; famous old players of the forgotten *rebot* (now played only, or chiefly, in Guipuzcoa); there are lovers' meetings by night, cut short by military service, and ended for ever by vows taken in a convent.

It is wisest to get to know the Basque country first, and then to read Loti's book, and see how much you have failed to observe!

In one way, it is true, books cannot help the wayfarer. He must do his own observing. But he will be keener to observe, and he will be able to harmonize his observations, and draw the right conclusions from them, if he has read wisely before he sets out. The best method is to read up the country well beforehand (and if it is a family party, let the reading as far as possible be done together; if not together, let each of the party specialize in such part of the subject as suggests itself), take no book with you, except the harmless necessary *Guide Bleu* (and if you can, use always a guide-book written in the country which you visit); but do take a pocket notebook—a loose-leaf, with refills handy, is best—and jot down everything which strikes you. Then read the country up again when you get back, and let your notes be compared with those of other travellers. Not only will one tour thus last almost a year, but it will have yielded up the uttermost of educational value and interest.

Indispensable for those who travel on foot is Mr. Hilaire Belloc's study, *The Pyrenees*. Foot-travel is still best in the mountains themselves, though Mr. Belloc allows us to get to our taking-off points by whatever beast or vehicle we can command. For serious wanderings and campings out, careful preparation must be made, and Mr. Belloc tells us all about this. The book was published in 1909, and a good deal has happened since then, while the once useful and entertaining chapter on Pyrenean inns must now be quite "cold." But the essential features of the mountains do not change; and I give therefore a longish account of Mr. Belloc's book, because in doing so I can best sum up the features of the range (or ranges) which any wayfarer

should know, and which all wayfarers on foot must know.

The first point therefore to seize from Mr. Belloc's sketch-map (opposite page 1) is the short distance from the foothills to the dividing ridge from the French side, and the long distance on the Spanish. Then there emerges the fact that the range as marked by its ridge is two ranges, the one from the Mediterranean to the Pic de l'Homme, and the other from due south of the Pic de l'Homme to a point south of Elizondo. The end of the one range and the beginning of the other are joined by a saddle, of about eight miles long, shaped like a **5**, whose tail comes just below Viella. Then one observes the wild irregularity (for so it looks) of the Spanish valleys, and the comparative regularity of the French valleys which from St. Jean Pied du Port eastwards run in threes, north to south or south by west, rather like three-leaved pieces of seaweed which one sees lying on the beach. The practical effect of this, for wayfarers, is that from the stalk of the seaweed one can take each leaf in turn, valley by valley, crossing at will in many instances from the point of one to the point of the other, though these lateral crossings often traverse very high cols. Then again the proximity of the foothills to the ridge makes possible the west-to-east railways and roads, especially the great Route des Pyrénées. Furthermore, the French valleys run so close up to the mountain wall that you can advance right up them till you are brought up sharp by a great *cirque* like those of Troumouse or Gavarnie, or you may almost penetrate the range into the opposite Spanish valley, as you nearly do from Luchon, but that the great Maladetta group happens to be in your way, or from Vernet-les-Bains, where you go right up to Canigou. Odd results also arise in regard to rivers, glaciers, and lakes, of which something will be said presently.

While M. Taine digresses amiably all the way, Mr. Belloc, a master of digression, is glued to his subject, and becomes almost as severe as some of the peaks themselves. Working from the mere physical features, he shows many pertinent results. For instance, the arrangement of towns and villages in each valley; first a town at the valley mouth, then the first mountain town (Argelès, Bedous, Laruns, and so on), and then the village belonging to, and giving its name to, the *col*. Next, the comparative want of French valleys east and west of the Argelès valley means that there are few roads crossing the ridge from north to south; omitting the coast routes, there are only four such roads, by Roncevaux, the Somport, the Pourtalet, and by the rather exceptional valley of the Cerdagne. There are, of course, other crossings. In regard to these roads, Mr. Belloc emphasizes (with Mr. Freeston) the simple rule that where there is a French road it is a good one, for anything wheeled, coach, carriage, dog-cart, wheelbarrow, bicycle, or car. That which is not a road may be only a mule-track; and it is important for walkers to remember that wherever they see tracks of mules it does not necessarily mean a path leading anywhere. But there are good tracks over several ports, the Port de Vénasque, for instance, and even over Gavarnie. Again, the wayfarer wants to know about weather, and owing to the configuration of the western range, rain blows easily in upon the western French valleys, up to the Aspe; so MM. Taine and Doré are not really exaggerating. As you go eastward, on the French side, you get drier. The political results of the natural features are chiefly interesting in the Basque country and the Cerdagne, where Basques and Catalans appear on either side of the range; and in the chance survival of Andorra among many little early republics, shut in by a circle of high mountains and charmingly inaccessible.

I do not dwell on Mr. Belloc's special directions to wayfarers on foot. His work is for them, and they must study it; but this emphasis upon the unexpected, whether mists, or "wrong *cols*," or camping-grounds by the map, where on arrival no flea can camp, is important; and his rule a sound one, that you must never calculate on being at a certain place at a certain time, and must provision yourself for longer than the normal reckoning of time. His notes on the danger of "the wrong valley" do indeed make one's flesh creep somewhat. But the fact is that even experienced walkers may make foolish errors, in the Pyrenees and elsewhere. I remember (in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales) going out on a great spur, by a reasonably clear track, to see the sunset. When, after a glorious vision, "at one stride came the dark," I turned to go back; none but a fool would have forgotten that with darkness the track, and all sense of direction, was lost, and with sheer falls to left and right one could not risk rambling. There I might now be, but that I heard the dimmest sound of a train whistle, many miles away, and that gave me my course. In the same district I hunted for water, and missed it for hours because I obstinately held to a certain idea of direction, instead of trusting more or less to luck. Not everyone is obstinate or forgetful, but in mountains a little thing will throw you out, and dangers of "wrong valleys" and "double *cols*" (resulting in about the same thing) are real. As for the dangers of correct readings of inadequate maps, one can find them on the Yorkshire fells. Thus much then for Mr. Belloc, in whom a few odd errors occur among much valuable detail. Only his etymologies are not always right, and Carol and Carlitte are not (in all probability) named from Carolus Magnus, but from a root Quer—meaning "mountainous," which we find in "Cerdagne" itself, and in various place-names in the

Roussillon. Where I have been able to test Mr. Belloc's hotel recommendations, they are justified; but he prefers the French (or Spanish) hostelry, if it is good from the French (or Spanish) standard. The "Midi" at Arreau, for instance, though technically still "primitive," deserves in other respects his praise. Moreover, his advice in the great tourist centres is probably wise, "go to the best hotel": it is just here where the mediocre may be very mediocre indeed.

In one sense it may be said that there are no glaciers in the Pyrenees, or only quite small ones. They are not altogether of the Alpine kind nor on the Alpine scale. The glaciers of the high Alps preserve better their shape and regularity; on the heights they are majestic; but they descend to the forests and valley slopes; one may meet them familiarly, poke them with a stick. The Pyrenean glaciers are shorter, and sometimes broader; they are but fragments of a system past, not working portions of a system present. Two particular glacial centres remain, one south of Argelès and one south of Luchon. From the valley of Argelès one sees the glacier of Las Néous on the sides of Balaïtous, and there are others on the adjoining Spanish mountains. Vignemale, the highest French peak, has its glaciers, and one of these descends to the altitude of about 2,000 metres. The eastern glacier (d'Ossoue) is perhaps the most picturesque of Pyrenean glaciers. The nine glaciers of Gavarnie, the most be-touristed place in the Pyrenees, are well known; but one must see them at their best, about April. Of these Gabiétou is remarkable for its "needles," towers, and obelisks, if you get near to see them. Troumouse has its glaciers also. To the east there are glacial fields on the crests of Oô and Lys; the Monts Maudits have two great glacial masses, retired and solitary, like most Pyrenean glaciers, on lofty peaks; there, immovable as they seem, they suffer a perpetual change and internal movement.

Glaciers will not affect the wayfarer, unless he be a student of these things. He may like to track them to their lairs (the time during which he may do so is short), and he may like to trace their former courses, in almost every valley, conspicuously in the valleys of the Tech (pronounced Tèc) and Têt (pronounced Tèt); or he may follow the course of the former Garonne glacier, coming from the *cirque* of the Val d'Aran; or perhaps that of the more direct glacier of the Aure, whose detritus he will find in the Lannemezan plateau. Thus far, then, of glaciers; now for the lakes, which for the most part belong to the glaciers and lie ensconced at a great height, unshaded by trees, and not of use, therefore, as camping-grounds. One, indeed, the Lac du Portillon d'Oô, is frozen over nearly all the year, and was once a meeting-place of great glaciers, crowding into its narrow cup. The lakes I do not enumerate; the finest, perhaps, is the Lac d'Oô, with its cascade of 800 feet leaping beneath a filmy veil till it reaches the lake-basin by a rocky delta. This lake is only some 4,500 feet up, and tall trees have established themselves at the foot of the cascade. Like most of the Pyrenean lakes, this one is gradually filling up with the rocks borne down by avalanches. The Lac de Gaube, which one reaches from Cauterets, and lies beneath Vignemale, is one of the best known of the number, and will always be associated with the story of the death of the honeymoon couple who lie buried a few miles from where I write; it is a story of a rickety boat; the husband leant over the side, and the wife jumped up in the boat, a thing dangerous always to do, and in the centre of this deep expanse, fatal. The lakes of Carlitte are of a special kind, and will be discussed when we reach the Cerdagne. As for the rivers, they need no special mention, except the Sègre, which begins by flowing north, and ought to be French, but is determinedly Spanish, and the Garonne,

whose birthplace is almost as much disputed as Homer's. It would be pleasant to think that this great French river rises in Spain, disappears in the Trou du Toro, and miraculously appears again four kilometres to the east at the Goueil de Jouéou. But the stream which disappears in the Trou disappears, it seems, for ever: and we must find the real beginnings of the Garonne in the stream of Béret, far to the east, which unites with the river of the Goueil near Arró. This trick of disappearing, however, is almost a habit with rivers farther north, in the neighbourhood of St. Girons and Foix, where are various grottos with their underground rivers. But for the present readers will be weary of geography; let us turn to natural history.

The Pyrenean bear is not extinct. With the izard it still haunts the higher altitudes, and is occasionally shot for its skin. It is said that from December 1927 to June 1928 eleven bears were slaughtered on the French side of the range; and of these, three in one day, and by the same hunter. The skins are very valuable since the war, and are worth a good deal of hard work and risk to procure.

As for the izard, I must be allowed to quote a stanza given by De Quincey (*Collected Works*, vol. xi, p. 344) from "The Wandering Jew"—the author is not named:

> If almost with eagle pinion
> O'er the Alps the chamois roam,
> Yet he has some small dominion
> Which, no doubt, he calls his home.

For "Alps" and "chamois" substitute "Pyrenees" and "izard," and you have most of the izard's natural history in a nutshell.

A good map of the Central Pyrenees, of the practical kind, can be seen in Packe's *Guide to the Pyrenees*, if a copy can still be had. It was a pioneer guide-book, and an excellent model. Those beginning their Pyrenees journeys

in the middle should certainly study carefully at Luchon the reliefs of the Pyrenees to be seen there. There is another good map in Packe's text, showing the mountains south of Luchon.

Packe wrote when travelling to Biarritz from Bayonne *en cacolet* was just going out. You sat on one side and the *cacolettiera*, a Basque damsel, on the other, of a mule or donkey. Now (in 1862) communication was by "omnibuses and minibuses"; Biarritz being a "little town" reminding you of a scene in an opera, but pleasant enough to make Mr. Packe quote Greek, rare indeed in guide-books; but he is a scholar, and, what is more, a scientist, and feels more interest in the geology of the Chambre d'Amour than in its legend. Packe was one of our Pyrenees climbing pioneers, and his name is justly remembered on the mountains. Though the book poses only as a handbook, and has the proper handbook information as to distances, prices, and so on, it is written here and there in the form of narrative, in a good style, and with much very interesting detail. He mentions, as do all writers on the Lac de Gaube, the death of the honeymoon couple, but his heart is clearly not in lakes, but on mountain peaks. On the Cirque de Gavarnie he is soberly eloquent, and quotes Simonides; and on fleas he is precise, rather discouraging, and quotes nobody.

It may be convenient to some readers to have a simple list of diseases, showing where they may receive treatment. They will no doubt be advised by their doctor; and independently of their doctor they would be wise to work up the question of mineral-water treatment, for which they can make a beginning in any good encyclopædia. How far the qualities of the waters themselves help I cannot pretend to say. That they have definite effects is obvious, since overdoses of some are quite dangerous. But it would seem, in these tabloid days, that we could get the "good" of the

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waters as easily at home. What, however, the spas give is what you cannot have at home, or at any rate do not have—successions of baths for outward treatment—and the skin also absorbs, as we can see by the effect of an ordinary, and especially a hot, sea bath; and sluicings of the inside by repeated water drinks, which must have a cleansing and purifying result. But the chief thing, which you cannot get at all at home, is the atmosphere, especially in mountain spas, combined with expert treatment; the exercise, walks down tempting valleys and even up mountain slopes; amusements; change of diet and surroundings, and sunshine. The total effect of all this must be considerable. I omit certain types of disease, and in any case the list does not pretend to completeness. Moreover, many spas will exert a beneficial influence in many diseases, and several have different types of waters for different patients.

Anæmia	Vernet and others.
Arthritis	Ax-les-Thermes.
Asthma	Eaux-Bonnes.
Bronchial troubles, catarrh	Cauterets, Eaux-Bonnes, Eaux-Chaudes, Cadéac.
Dyspepsia	Argelès.
Gout	Eaux-Chaudes.
Gravel, gallstones	Capvern.
Nervous troubles ..	Ax, Ussat, and others.
Paralyses	Argelès and others.
Pharyngal troubles	Cadéac.
Phthisis	Amélie (early stages), Eaux-Bonnes, both the Bagnères springs.
Respiratory trouble	Amélie.
Rheumatism ..	Amélie, Eaux-Chaudes, Barèges, both Bagnères, Ussat.
Skin troubles ..	Bagnères de Luchon, Bagnères de Bigorre, Barèges, Cadéac, Salies-de-Béarn, Usson, Vernet.
Throat troubles ..	Cauterets.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANCE OF THE PYRENEES

THE present handbook, as has been already stated, is not intended for mountaineers, who will need special works. Ordinary tourists are not mountaineers, though they will probably make some of the customary ascensions. If they find such ascensions easy and pleasant, let them go back in thought to the days when the Pyrenean heights were practically unknown and unworked except by hunters of the izard.

The story of the early pioneers is a romantic one. Most visitors to the Pyrenees have heard of the intrepid Ramond, who stands at the head of an honourable galaxy of names. Fewer, perhaps, have heard of Chausenque, another of the great ones; very few of Jubinal, no mountaineer, but the writer of imaginary visits to the Pyrenees, whose work provoked Taine's protest, "J'y suis allé; c'est un mérite." Few, again, have heard of Lézat; more, perhaps, of the English barrister, Packe, and his dog Ossoue; nearly everyone of Count Henry Russell, his sleeping-bag, and his private mountain peak.

Few ordinary Pyrenean visitors have probably heard, however, of the whirlwind of the Pyrenees, Tonnellé, to whose fevered ascents and remarkably observant notes Beraldi [1] rightly gives many of his precious pages. To read of Tonnellé's peaks and passes is like reading the famous description of the beacon-fire from Troy in the *Agamemnon*,

[1] *Cent Ans aux Pyrénées.*

leaping from mountain-top to mountain-top till it came to rest at Argos. A short account of his swift travels will give a wonderful general picture of what Pyrenean wayfaring may become.

Tonnellé, a learned and talented man of twenty, linguist, artist, mystic, came in 1859 to Luchon with some friends. Immediately the Pyrenees claimed and seized him. His friends went away, he stayed behind; for three hurried months he haunted the mountains, and then returned home to die. He left behind no book, but precious notes and impressions.

It was on July 6th (1858) that Alfred Tonnellé arrived at Toulouse; thence he reaches Luchon, and promptly mounts the small eminence behind the thermal station—the first ascension of his marvellous two months' activity. He begins as an ordinary Luchonnist—the valley of the Glève, of Aran, Bosost, the Portillon; next day he rode up Superbagnères, descending by the Lys valley. Then the lakes and cascades, which fill him with mystical longings; on the 15th and 16th he makes the thirty-fourth ascent of Néthou by the Pas de Mahomet (*"impossible pour celui qui aurait le vertige"*) in misty weather. On the summit he feels himself "almost lifted above the earth." Then a few days' comparative rest; the weather misty or rainy; but on the 24th he is at the Lac d'Oô and arranging an expedition to Crabioules. Starting in the dark, he crosses the lake, passes Espingo and Saousat, and by noon is well on his way to the summit, "floating"—so he describes his feelings—"in the liquid and marvellously pure atmosphere."

He is not satisfied with the route suggested for return, but takes charge of the route and works his way by the Literroles glaciers—an unusual way; is caught by the mists; often has to retrace his path; and descends at length to the *Gouffre d'Enfer*.

His eye is, however, all the time on the Fourcanade, as yet unclimbed. So off he goes in his whirlwind way, by the Port de Vénasque and the Trou du Toro; from his night's lodging-place, in a shepherd's hut, he describes Néthou in the mists, with the glint of the glaciers below. Gripped as he was by the magnificent, the stupendous, he still has an eye for the things at his feet: there are irises and immortelles; and the flickering light of the shepherd's fire is as dear to him as the diamond gleam of Néthou's ice. Of course he does not sleep; he is out and about to see Nature by night at this high altitude. Next day, by the valley of Essera, he approaches the forbidding Fourcanade, attacks it from the west, and fails, works round by the crest of the valley to the back, and finds a *col*, to be called after him, later on, the Col Alfred. There is a ridge like "Mahomet's Bridge," and then an *arrête* between chasms which must be bestrid, and at last the summit!

The descent is the real difficulty; but at seven o'clock the little party, drenched by a storm, creeps in to Viella. Next day he makes back for Luchon by Vitallès, Castanèze, and so through Vénasque.

Gavarnie and Mont-Perdu come next, and by the Val d'Araça to Torla. Thence he blazes a new trail to Salimas, and thence to Gistain and the Lac du Port Oô. The Spanish side has attracted him; his active mind turns longingly towards Catalonia. On August 18th, after the great festival of the 15th, he starts for Perpignan, by the Spanish side. The route leads by the Portillon, Viella, Alos, Esterri, Escalo (he is drawn into the village procession which is going on), Bixerrari, on the edges of Andorra, Andorra Ville, Les Escaldas, Urgel (of which he gives a brilliant description), Puycerda, and Bourg Madame. Thence he rambles (but it is a feverish ramble) to Vernet, Prats-de-Mollo, past, but not over, Canigou, which is in mists; he salutes the sea,

"Thalassa! Thalassa!" To see the last of his beloved Pyrenees, he beholds them disappear majestically into the sea at Cap Créus, and, looking back, notes how the blue mountains and sky approach one another until at last there is but a "mist of mountains" on the far horizon. Banyuls, Collioure, a last climb (the lighthouse at Port Vendres), and then "a thorough clean-up" at Perpignan. There we leave him; he explores his way by Cette, Aigues-Mortes, and Arles to Marseille, and then up to Lyon. On October 14th, back at Tours, he dies of typhoid.

We may fairly feel that no Pyrenean achieved so much so swiftly. A peak to his credit; the Spanish Pyrenees described and opened out; new routes braved; and the long stretch from Luchon to the Eastern Spanish frontier accomplished in quick time, but with penetrating observation. With all this, Tonnellé stands very high even among men who devoted half a lifetime to the mountains. And he could write better, perhaps, than them all. "A wild, narrow gorge, but very beautiful. Masses of overarching rocks; a foaming stream, of a lovely delicate blue, sometimes gripped between lofty walls; soon the pathway climbs up like a goat, or comes down, by sharp descents, into the very bed of the torrent. . . ."

"The valley in its dull and monotonous grandeur, a great desert of boulders; wherever you look, you see about you terrible and magnificent solitudes. . . ."

"Gloomy appearance of Catalan villages; huts of uncut stones, low, dark; the roofs damaged; old wooden balconies whose carved stanchions are all out of place. . . ."

It could only have been Tonnellé—and it was—who penned the telling sentence, "Abondance et familiarité des puces."

It must be a source of self-gratulation to ourselves that

England and Ireland played no mean part in the later romance of the Pyrenees. Indeed, the two heroes, Packe and Russell, may be said to have revived the romance of the mountains when they were perilously near becoming unromantic.

"Intrepidity" hardly describes the character of Count Russell,[1] half Irish and half French, born at Toulouse, and accustomed from an early date to the sight of the mountains; his first view of Vignemale was when he was six. Torn away, for a time, from his already beloved mountains, he came back, after a long voyage, to Pau, at the end of 1857.

It was in 1858, on his third attempt to get a view from Mont-Perdu, rightly so named, that he made his famous descent, a greater exploit, perhaps, than many of his ascents, in mist and darkness, over a route obscure in daylight, and now blocked with snow, reaching the Brèche de Roland, by a veritable flight, just before actual darkness fell; hanging there, foodless, rugless, through twelve hours of Pyrenean storms, of which even in his extremity he could enjoy the glory and splendour; wandering, next morning, to the very precipice of the *cirque*, and warned back in time by hearing the sound of the cascade (inaudible from the true path), and so getting his bearings and descending to Gavarnie, to find a search-party preparing to track at least his remains.

There was a glorious beginning to a great career—broken off, for the present, by a voyage to the far East; and his next climbs were in New Zealand.

Once back in his beloved Pyrenees, he spent forty years adoring them and fighting them.

His qualifications as a mountaineer were remarkable. He was a wonderful walker; he had a splendid head (on his

[1] Russell is a very familiar figure in Pyrenean literature, apart from his own works. But I have found special help in Beraldi.

third ascent of Mont-Perdu his pony got dizzy and shied on a precipice above which a poetical inscription enjoined a "calm and undaunted view"); but Russell never grew dizzy (and never shied); he had a rather unusual power of lasting—in emergency—without food; and he had a strange mystical eccentricity which often was as valuable as mere stamina and courage.

He climbed Vignemale first, and then mastered a new approach to Mont-Perdu. Though he held to Gavarnie as the best working centre, he was catholic in his tastes; he climbs and appreciates Canigou.

One of his peculiarities was his love for solitude, even (one might say especially) in peaks unclimbed, or thought to be as yet unclimbed (as Le Perdighère). He was without proper maps, and he never carried an alpenstock. It was all Homeric in its simplicity. But Russell's solitary climbing was to have an end, or at least a truce.

In 1858 Russell had met, at the Brèche de Roland, Tonnellé, climbing Mont-Perdu. They parted at the summit: Russell to return to Gavarnie (by some new route if possible —that was always his way); Tonnellé to descend to Torla and the Val d'Araça. On lower ground, near Barères, Russell met Packe.

The name and title of Russell was not unknown to Packe. In 1861, making his second ascent of Néthou, Packe found a humorous couplet signed by "Russell of Killough," brother of Count Russell, in the book kept on the top.

Charles Packe, barrister, an Alpinist, and already a writer (Tonnellé, Russell, and Packe were all writers of no mean calibre; Russell was something of a poet too), took to the Pyrenees finally in 1859. He was, like Russell, a "Gavarniste" at first; but later he felt the call and the grip of Luchon, and his *Guide* is written largely from the Luchonnais standpoint—a little book, but great as a pioneering effort.

He had climbed the ugly-looking Pic du Port, to Sauvegarde (which dominates the Port de Vénasque), with Archdeacon Hardwich, an excellent climber, but also bitten with the love for the "other way"—*viæ ulterioris amore*. Packe kept the more usual path, and the Archdeacon did not appear at the meeting-point. He must have slid on grassy slopes, often more treacherous (let the merest tourist note this) than ice, and certainly, if you once begin a slide, giving less chance for hold than most ice. Packe was not discouraged. In 1860 he climbs Néthou twice, and in 1861 he "discovers" the Posets, and later he sights a mysterious peak which appeared and hid itself unexpectedly: it was the Balaïtous. To sight it was to climb it, but he did not reach the summit.

Packe and Russell were complementary to one another. Packe, the student, the sober enthusiast; Russell, the almost hectic climber for climbing's sake; the two worked wonderfully together. It was Russell, however, not Packe, who was the more practical; in emergency, it was Packe, not Russell, who proved the stronger man; both were magnificent walkers, but it was Packe who seemed *vires adquirere eundo*.

The pair did not neglect the east. They climbed, singly or together, the Pic de Carlitte. Packe explores the Monts-Maudits, and traverses almost unknown *cols*; Russell loses his way on the Posets, and climbs by an unexpected—but not, as it happened, untrodden—route the Pic Coroné. So they go on: Packe botanizing, Russell poetizing. They lose themselves by Lake Caillaouas, below the Glacier des Gourgs-Blancs; there they spent a miserable night. Russell next morning pushes on, always *excelsior*[1]; he really discovers the unknown region of these lakes, glaciers, and peaks. From Gavarnie they plan a madcap scheme to climb

[1] The word really means "taller," but thanks to the young man's "banner with a strange device" we have come to think it means "higher."

Mont-Perdu and the "Cylinder," and see if through the mountain solitudes they can hear one another's voice. Packe feared fog; Russell went up to the *col* of Mont-Perdu, and had to find his way back by the gleam of the Rochers-Blancs. "On palpait l'abîme," says Russell. So it goes on.

Packe, whose dog "jibs" at the last ascent, re-climbs Balaïtous; Russell follows him, but—needless to say—descends a different way. Packe, walking predecessor of Schrader (whose panoramas can be seen in the Guide Bleu), sets to work to map the Monts-Maudits, Spanish slopes and all. He climbs (the first ascent) Malibierne—an "easy summit," Russell, who climbed it alone, notes. But hard things might seem easy to one who crosses alone from Gavarnie to Cauterets by the Col de Male-Rouge ("best not to do it alone," he notes), or from Sallient to Panticosa by the Col de Bondeillos.

In 1866 Russell published his great work, *Les Grandes Ascensions des Pyrénées d'une mer à l'autre.*"

The story of Russell and Packe becomes just a list of lakes, glaciers, and peaks: the Pic d'Enfer, the Marcadau, Vignemale (climbed in mid-winter), the Munia.

In 1871 Russell climbs Néthou, alone, for his fourth time. "Terrible weather; hungry; snow; fog; no compass; solitude!' He sees from below Gavarnie what seems an "easy task," to get to the source of the Great Cascade; he crosses the Astazou-Barane fall, is rained on by a stone avalanche from Marboré, mounts higher and higher and steeper and steeper. What he dislodges falls clear into the *cirque*. At length he hears—in the fog—the Great Cascade right below him; but he can get no higher. The sound of the Cascade of Astazou-Barane puts him wise as to his direction; he descends, but even he labels his exploit "foolish." But this does not mean that his work is over. In 1874 he covers more ground than ever. He works from Gavarnie to Luchon by

the crests, but has to descend now into Spain, now into France again.

On the whole Russell kept to his rule of not climbing peaks under 3,000 metres, and if he climbed lower peaks, or if he re-climbed new peaks, to take them from some unusual and more difficult angle.

Packe, for his part, begins to fade away from the scene as a climber. But he remained faithful to the mountains, which he had certainly helped much to "discover." He died in 1896; but four years earlier, at sixty-six years of age, he ascended Sauvegarde by the Port de Vénasque and viewed again the scene of his companion's disappearance, thirty-three years before. He rode down the Gorge de Malibierne, which he had ascended (as "first-foot") from the east twenty-seven years before.

In 1875 Russell attacked the Bisouri, then not officially named; he passed through the Cirque de Bernère, and by the Lac d'Estaëns; to his disappointment this isolated and sterile peak proved quite easy. In fact Russell was getting into rather a melancholy state just now, and lamented to Packe that there was not much more to be done on the real heights.

Still there remained a chance: the Posets[1] had not been climbed from the west. It must be done. Russell approached by the Porte d'Enfer (whose name suggests destruction; it is the only safe pass among the many false ones which offer themselves there) and the Lac Caillaonas, and then went to much pains to reach the unclimbed side. Sleep is impossible; the only cavern Russell and his guides can find is a dripping cavern; they endure a sort of mediæval torture all night. When daylight comes the route is still to be found. At length the summit, reached by a stiff ridge.

[1] Le Posets, not Les Posets (= Puits). But it should strictly be *Es* Posets.

Next it is the turn again of Néthou, and this, too, by a new route, from the left—and in a violent gale, with much risk of avalanches.

Then comes Collorada, approached from Canfranc (now the frontier station of the Jaca railway), and a descent into the curious Cirque d'Yp, an enclosed *cirque*, like the Capcir on a less scale, only opening on the west to give passage to the lake waters. Those who want to get "right away" into the Pyrenees, far from the crowd, can do no better than make for this mysterious, almost sunless and funereal, retreat.

The next great expedition was the circling, or half-circling, of Néthou, east to south.

Such weather broke over him and his guide that, dauntless as he was, his spirits sank: he crosses the Néthou south-eastern glacier; he is literally blown over by the wind. (Mountain winds blow according to the slopes and curves of the mountains; they catch you at odd angles.) Past his own peak (Russell has a peak—Le Petit Néthou formerly—as Packe has a lake), with Malibierne behind him, and an unknown *col* leading towards it, Russell reached the south spurs, or rather, we might say, the south well of Néthou, and scaling this finds himself on a sentinel peak, which he rightly names the Pic des Tempêtes.

Back again in the west, he makes the first ascent of Spijeoles (from the Lac and Vallée d'Oô). But Russell was gradually coming to anchor. He was always busy writing, and—poet and mountain-mystic as he was—his writings have a value for us almost comparable to those of Wordsworth. His great work, *Les Souvenirs d'un Montagnard*, was finished in 1878, though never actually "published"; and it gives a list, in order of time, of his summits, but it also gives a curious bit of self-study and introspection, and reveals to us the innermost sensations of the mountaineer

on the mountain-side. Vignemale claimed him: Vignemale and solitude, or, rather, the desire for solitude.

A night spent on Vignemale, in his sleeping-bag, suggested residence on Vignemale, some sort of residence where one might wake at least unfrozen. He "bought" (or leased) the mountain—without right to forbid trespass!—and began his famous grottos (for he would have no desecrating building)—grottos, since new ones had to be opened out as Vignemale, indignant, blocked the earlier ones. Yet this did not bring solitude; as the "Old Man of the Mountain" Russell has become a legendary hero, while his Villa Russell rather naturally became a sort of raree-show. One may almost say that his retirement from the crowd brought the crowd to his retirement, and that his isolation brought along with it "vulgarization." At any rate, Russell himself, who (strange as it may seem) was a great lover of comfort, and never saw any good in risking one's neck "unnecessarily," could remain in reasonable comfort among his beloved snows and in sight of his beloved summits.

It would, however, be unjust to leave Russell there, as if his work were done. In 1885 he climbed the ridge of Lardañita (near the Posets); he spent a midnight on Mont-Perdu. But his greatest discoveries were done; and as the unkindest cut of all, Vignemale summons the winds and positively blows him out of his "villa"—"difficult but necessary descent" is his comment.

With Russell's (almost) retirement one part of the romance of Pyrenean exploration comes to an end. Russell himself had always been ready (anxious, indeed) to attack his peaks by rather impossible routes, but, as a rule, only when they were *his* peaks, when he had conquered them first by a fair-and-square frontal attack.

Now enters the period of the "impossible approach," of what Russell and others—men daunted by nothing—

rightly scorned as mere mountaineering acrobatics. Not that there were not fine achievements, even if some of these became what Russell would call "necessary."

Such was the ascent by Swan of Astazoa from the north. Heroism did become necessary here, since the glacier on the north proved intractable; huge crevasses barred the way; it was the time ripe for avalanches; a great one fell, and it was hopeless to turn backward. Finally there was a jump on to a delicate ice-bridge; and after that a descent, by carefully cut steps, almost into a huge crevasse. But he (and his guide, Henri Passet) at last "got there," descending by the ordinary route.

In a book written for British wayfarers it is not amiss to lay some stress upon the part our fellow-countrymen (or our part fellow-countrymen) have played in the romantic opening up of Pyrenean passes, unknown valleys, and unclimbed peaks.

But it would be absurd to suggest that the French themselves have not done the greatest part, if not always the most spectacular or most romantic part, of the opening of their Pyrenees. There are rows of splendid names from Ramond downward, including not only the Survey officers, but men of science, pioneers like Nansouty, expert mappists like Schrader, explorers of the glaciers and lakes (like Belloc[1]), and many keen climbers, inspired with the true spirit of Tonnellé and Russell themselves. Yet these islands have, indeed, "done their bit."

Obvious comparisons and contrasts have always been made between Pyrenees and Swiss Alps. Romance, indeed, there has been in the Alps, and in plenty; of tragedies there have been plenty. But the romance of the Pyrenees is of a different order, as is their scenery; and without applying the foolish—and in any case now almost meaningless—

[1] Émile, not Hilaire, who also is a "Pyrenean" name.

epithet of "feminine" to the Pyrenees, one may say that the charm of the Pyrenees, and the affection inspired by them, almost justifies some such word. But hear Russell himself—than whom none knew better for what the Pyrenees stand. In what was almost his *valete*, an article, "Charmes et Beautés des Pyrénées" in the *Annuaire* of the Club Alpin (written in September 1902), this is something of what the veteran (he hated so to be called, but he had earned the title) says:—

"The Alps astound, the Pyrenees attract and soften us. They have a supreme and indefinable poetry . . . and have inspired eternal passions. Their waters are pure as crystal, their forests are like waving robes of green or black velvet. . . . Their lakes . . . sleeping and lost in the snows whence they came, are there to sparkle like jewels on the forehead of the Pyrenees. . . . They talk one to another by means of the clear and fierce little torrents which leaping from the one to the other never cease chattering, even in winter, under the snow. . . . Then there is the light. A cloudless Pyrenean day has an incomparable glow, and the night, even when moonless, an amazing clearness; it is the South in all its glory. The fine Pyrenean nights recall those of the East. . . . The mountains have an Oriental grace and languor, and their colours . . . are richer and more burning than in the Alps. . . . It is to the Pyrenees that the smiles of the artist and the heart of the poet will always turn."

CHAPTER III

THE WESTERN VALLEYS

TO most people "the Pyrenees" mean Pau, Cauterets, and Gavarnie; and the French have invented the word "Gavarniste" for the ordinary English tourist. It is part of the scheme of this book to lay more stress on the less known; the scale of it, therefore, will grow larger as we advance further east. Not that the Western Pyrenees are not full of beauty and charm. It was right that they should be "discovered" first; but they have had perhaps undue attention, and there is also a world of beauty and charm elsewhere. Most travellers to the western range will follow the Bordeaux–Dax–Pau route; but many will also visit the coast, and see something of St. Jean-de-Luz, Bayonne, and Biarritz, before striking inland. Some will take the western range on the way to or from Spain, and possibly will approach the mountains first from the Spanish side, at Roncesvalles or Pampeluna.

It will be convenient to consider this section of the range first, and then look at the valleys, in order as they run, by which one approaches the range from the north. In the Introductory Chapter geographical reason is given why there is not a great deal that is habitable immediately on the Spanish slopes, where we should rather have expected the majority of Pyrenean towns to lie.

As one descends from Bordeaux, itself, if noisy, a city of undoubted interest, the first place which will normally be reckoned Pyrenean is Bayonne, just across the Adour.

Bayonne, at the one end, divides my affections with Perpignan, at the other. Like Perpignan, it has been the centre of much fighting, and it plays no small part, in various ways, in military history. It fell to our arms, under Sir John Hope, 1814, having long been ours in Angevin times. It is, as its name implies, quite a serious port.

The cathedral was begun in the thirteenth century, in the "Northern" style, what we call Early Gothic. It has a good deal of good old glass, and a very fine marble altar. At the side is the cloister, from which one gets a good general view of the cathedral, which one can also see to much advantage along the Nive.

Altogether a charming place; and I prefer the poor relation to the millionaire round the corner; in fact, when I go to Biarritz I stay at Bayonne. Not but that Biarritz is both beautiful and (like Monte Carlo and many other expensive places) inexpensive when you know your way about. The best thing for those who desire to avoid the great international hotels (and who should not?) is to stalk your place beforehand. Lunch at some humble restaurant within a radius of thirty or forty kilometres—not too near —and gently turn the conversation on to Biarritz; or wherever it may be. Then you will discover, what I have discovered, that everyone in France (in Italy, too) has a brother-in-law, and that this brother-in-law is just working up a nice little hotel in X, and would be charmed to entertain you; which, in truth, he will do excellently. Never despise brothers-in-law, even if they prove to be the hotel boots. So it fell out once in the Tyrol: I had met a man when I was utterly lost; he got me into the right track and commended me to his brother-in-law, whereby I got the best place in the diligence next day and much incidental comfort, and I am sure my travel-stained boots had become resplendent, though I omitted to look at them.

BAYONNE

One great charm of Biarritz is its rocks, for, on a sandy coast, rocks there are. You get a broken sea-line, and the Atlantic, in this corner, is at its best; while if it grows angry it is almost better. With its growth in prosperity and its rapid Anglicizing (though it is a considerable Spanish and French resort in summer) Biarritz is full of the type of amusements and occupations which the Englishman in France begins to demand. Once I examined for entrance into one of our greatest public schools; the question (a slightly foolish one) was, "What are the chief occupations of Scotland?" And one answer was: "Golfing, shooting, stalking, and the ordinary sort of thing." One must add, abroad, "gambling." Biarritz answers to the description of a watering-place in *Alice in Wonderland*: sea, beach, a front, houses, a railway station[1]; but it is an amazingly wonderful bit of grouping, and experts call it the best-planned seaside place in Europe. The rocks, of which the Rocher de la Vierge is linked to land by a mole, break up the coast-line into two bays, each protected on at least two sides.

Biarritz, as Bayonne, is a Basque centre, and the Basques, like the Catalans, are on both sides of the range.

The Basque Museum at Bayonne, with the Museum of Basque Ethnography at San Sebastian, gives as complete an idea of Basque life as can be gathered from exhibits. The rooms at Bayonne are devoted to different subjects: there is one for religious art, there are others for various crafts, among which the making and ornamentation of the *makhilas*, or Basque sticks, is one. The ornamentation is actually done on the wood as it grows. Then there is a room devoted to pelota. The Basque living-rooms are filled (in

[1] It has just (1928) started a regular air service (for week-ends during the season) to and from London. You leave on Saturday morning, and are at Biarritz for tea; you return thence on Sunday afternoon.

fact, as is customary in these folk museums, are overfilled) with furniture of all sorts, including highly primitive cooking utensils and apparatus.

There are also pictures, old engravings, and so on, of Bayonne, Biarritz, and the French Basque country generally; and there are ordinary Basque peasant costumes, and also those worn in the Basque plays, pastorales, and mascarades.

Here it may be worth while correcting a common error. The Basques speak "euscara," or "escualdunac," a language unlike those called "Indo-European," such as our own; and people are apt to think that the Basques are necessarily a different race altogether from others found in Europe. That may be so; but often a language is imposed by some dominant race upon peoples, or fragments of peoples, in their borders.[1] Thus India spoke and speaks, in some part, a language sister to our own, but the race is different. The Basques, moreover, are actually a blended race, as we now know them. Possibly both race and language are survivals of one of the very early European races and languages. The Basque word for "axe" and so on suggests " stone," and they may be a derelict race united by descent to the people who lived in Pyrenean caves. But derelict they are only in the ethnographical sense. They have always been hardy navigators, fond of outdoor sport; they have many games of their own developing, and they take to Rugby football as if it had been invented specially for them. Why we have never imported pelota is hard to see; it is a magnificent game, and can be played in a fairly primitive court, provided we were ready to accept the primitive, and not wreck the game by over-elaboration, as in golf. It is fascinating to see a pelota match, but terrifying to hear it. Bets are made during the rallies—in fact it seems that

[1] On this see further below, p. 48.

lightning bets are contracted during a stroke. The noise is dinning; passions run high.

The other Bayonne museum is the Musée Bonnat, containing the paintings and other works of Bonnat himself, and also his splendid collection of paintings and all sorts of works of art. The story of Bonnat is one which does credit both to himself and to Bayonne. He was obliged to work for his living and that of his family after the failure of a small business in Madrid, where Bonnat had been living for some years. An artist saw some of his pictures, however, and the municipality made the young man a grant, which he thus nobly repaid. There are most valuable sketches by many of the very greatest masters. Our own country, represented so poorly in many of the Continental galleries (there is a Lawrence or two at the Prado at Madrid, and one finds Lely now and then, who was Dutch), may there boast Lawrences, Reynolds, a Constable, and a not-quite Turner; there are Goyas from Spain; and among the sketches are some by Dürer, da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Titian, and almost everybody who matters. The traveller in Bayonne is, indeed, well provided against a wet day, but he should be prepared to give one or more of the finest days to the Bonnat collection.

To most people who see the Adour at Bayonne flowing discreetly, if quietly, between its banks and quays—sleeping, so to speak, in its bed—it will not have occurred that it was not always so. The Adour, a stream from the mountains, seems to have been seized with revulsion against its early surroundings, and to have determined to run sluggishly into the sea, or into the sands, if possible, on the way, at Cap Breton.

A big storm (and we must remember what a business these western-flowing rivers of France have to get into the

sea in time of gales) somewhere in the late fourteenth century blocked the estuary; the river had to do what it could, and it found an outlet at Vieux-Boucan, now a little village on the Messanges canal, surrounded by sand-dunes, cut, on the south, by the stream of Soustons, which did duty as the outlet of the Adour for some time. The next stream northward, of Hachet, has to run almost parallel with the sea for some time before finding a channel. In 1579 the people of Bayonne, not seeing the use of a river which ran away from them just when it might be most precious, cut a new bed for the Adour through the dunes; there the Adour duly flows; but Nature has her revenges: the bar at the mouth is constantly giving trouble, and though unusually big tonnage now reaches the port, it is only by means of great modern engineering works and constant watching that the larger shipping can continue to find its way to port. The chief quays are at Boucan, but Bayonne itself, on its left bank, and at St. Esprit, accommodates a respectable annual tonnage. Its business is largely in iron, the ore coming largely from Spain, the coal from England.

As a result, the fishing industry has rather left Bayonne, at one time Bayonne fishermen frequented the Newfoundland banks.

Bayonne is clearly the place of superlatives (as, indeed, are many places in the Midi). The coffee was *notre café spécial supra extra*—words can clearly no further go—nor, to be merely fair, could the coffee. At the *fête foraine* there was a booth labelled *Jeu des Gagnants! Plus de gagnants que de joueurs! Onze gagnants sur dix joueurs!* This is clearly the place to make for. A fortune is evidently unavoidable.

Moreover, the little boy at the hotel was called Clovis, which seems a superlative sort of name for a small and rather naughty boy. And can anyone please explain why a

fox-skin should be hung up in a butcher's shop? It seems somehow, but dimly, to suggest the reply of the man who was asked if he could eat skunk: "I kin: bit I'm not drawn."

Bayonne comes to earth, however, in the names of its barges, which are literal and candid even to crudeness. One was called the *Inattendu*.

Of all the western river valleys, the Nive is doubtless the most charming to explore, and it runs through the most delightful places. Rising north-west of the forest of Iraty and by the forest of Orion, almost at the foot of Orsansurieta, it runs through Béhérobie and Esterençuby (two good names to start with), where it picks up a tributary, the Estéren-Guibel. The valley is first wide, and then, after Esterençuby, it narrows to a gorge, through which, however, vehicles may pass. At St. Jean-Pied-de-Port the Nive is a full-sized river, though it is not officially navigable till Cambo, and not actually so till Ustaritz.

Charming indeed is the Nive in its further career; charming the villages and little towns through which it flows: Eyharce, Gahardon, Bidarray in its little semicircle of mountains, Itxassou and the Pas de Roland, Cambo, Jatxou, Ustaritz, where begin the fine houses and little properties of the Basque "Americans."

The valley sums up all the delights of this Basque country: bare mountain-tops, marvellously fruitful valleys, little humble villages, a modern tourist centre (Cambo), and old Basque towns (St. Jean-Pied-de-Port and Ustaritz); though it is blocked by weirs after Cambo, it only gives an impression of greater calm and less ruffled mirrors for the overarching trees and the glorious sky over all.

Cambo and Ustaritz are great pelota centres—for *le blaid*, no doubt, though old notices may still remain, *On ne joue pas le blaid*.

South of Biarritz, after Bidart and Guéthary, pleasant little places, not so very much exploited yet, with excellent views of sea and mountains, with fishing-boats and bathing beaches, comes St. Jean-de-Luz, one of the best known of Pyrenean resorts. It was once a famous port, and worthy scene of a royal wedding; but decadence due to political causes was completed by Nature and the sea. The thirteenth-century church, scene of the wedding (Louis XIV and Maria Theresa), is of a single span, and has three galleries. In many Basque churches the women sit below, the men in the surrounding galleries; but customs vary.

Along the coast, and inland, are many pleasant attractions; trams run to most of them, and to La Rhune there is a funicular. Up the Nivelle valley the frontier can be reached at Dancharinéa. Or, on the way to Cambo is the little Basque town of Espelette. The beach of Hendaye is some little way from the town; it is a fine bathing beach, and there are hotels and villas near. Thence one can cross the Bidassoa to Fuenterrabia, which still retains much of its ancient appearance, and is indubitably Spanish—red tiles, balconies, mantillas, and all. It is full of story, but that story is mostly of war. Each year it celebrates in early September its deliverance from the great siege of 1638.

Those who have time to put in at Fuenterrabia should go and do a little business in the Post Office. In the first place, it is in a café, and yet when you get to the café they look pained and astonished if you ask where it is. Possibly you are expected to have a certain minimum of refreshment, and then, with the bill, they give you a document containing the secret. Anyway, it is upstairs, and once there all is well; you wave your postcard, they dig out a stamp, and in their courtly Spanish way wrap it up for you in a bit of paper. As an example of the difficulty of Basque, the landlord at the hotel may be instanced, who had various tongues,

and spoke a mosaic of them, but after thirty years in a Basque province had no Basque.

Round Fuenterrabia were to be found what I looked for elsewhere in vain, tree-trunk wheels on the carts. The curious and the learned may know that in the "original" Indo-European tongue, at which we arrive by comparison of all the languages of the family, there is a word for a wheel, but none for a spoke. Round Fuenterrabia, then, we are certainly in the land of the primeval.

Many travellers will not rest at Fuenterrabia, but go on to San Sebastian, one of the most beautifully situated of all coast towns, with the Iberian mountains, a true continuation of the French Pyrenees, majestically grouped behind. It is a delightful place to stay at,[1] and it is worth going there if only to see the Spanish children on the beach, chasing the ebbing Neptune, and flying him when he comes back; entangling their gorgeously arrayed nurses in the tent-ropes as the waves sweep up, themselves spirited away into safety. There are two bathing beaches, of which I recommend the farther and smaller one. I happened to be there during a sudden mobilization, and they mobilized the most astonishing gun I ever saw: I say "mobilized" technically, but they could not shift it. San Sebastian is no doubt even more habitable now than when I was last there; owing to the closing of the Casino for gambling purposes, that section of holiday-makers which desires to get rich quick is not so evident; for their activities they flee across the frontier to Biarritz.

One can attack the Western Pyrenees from the south, through Pamplona or Jaca. Pampeluna is reached from San Sebastian through Tolosa, or from Burgos through Alsasua; and from Pampeluna one may go north by Elizondo, head of the little valley of Baztan, once a little oligarchy.

[1] I am always most happy at the *Hôtel Terminus*.

Mr. Belloc (some little time ago) speaks highly of the hotel entertainment at Elizondo. Otherwise the route is through St. Jean-Pied-de-Port. Pampeluna (or Pampelune) has a fine Gothic cathedral, with a late façade. There is very fine ironwork and wood-carving. The cloister is unusually good, and there is a wonderful door from the cathedral.

From Bayonne (for we must suppose ourselves back on the French side) one may strike the Pyrenees best at St. Étienne (de Baigorry), or at St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, a little pink town with ramparts, fine old houses, and an old bridge over the Nive. At St. Jean one is in the centre of all sorts of excursions. The fishing I have not tried, and my experience generally is that where you get tourists (who come, perhaps, partly for the fishing) the fish are all removed from the river in certain tortuous ways to feed the tourist. There are streams in plenty hereabout, but to get good fishing you must get well out of the radius of hotels and consequent poachers.[1] It will be wise, however, for the angler always to carry (as I do) a light rod; where heavier rods and tackle are wanted, there will generally be someone there to provide them. Ascents can be made of quite respectable peaks, Des Escaliers, for instance, of about 4,400 feet; and there are excellent forests about. Pampeluna can be reached by Roncevaux, a small village, with a very famous name, thanks to the defeat of part of Charlemagne's army, and the great Priory, with many treasures, chiefly the Madonna, object of pilgrimages, and a weeping Madonna, whose tears are diamonds. At the chapel opposite are still said masses for Charlemagne's heroes. There was another French defeat at Roncevaux in 824, and these two defeats have become blended in tradition.

[1] Part of the Nive is, however, preserved. The Nive Angler's Club has its centre at St. Jean-Pied-de-Port. An account of the Club and its waters is given by Eleanor Elsner, *The Romance of the Basque Country*, pp. 146 ff.

CHAPTER IV

THE BASQUE COUNTRY

SEEING that the less-known region of Catalonia is to have its history recounted, not indeed in its fullness, but in its salient features, an injustice will be done if the Basque country on the west, also stretching on either side of the range, does not receive rather more historical notice than would naturally appear in the necessary mention of Basque provinces and in the history of Béarn, which partly centres in Pau. The east has Hannibal and Pompeius, the west has Charlemagne and Roland, Moors, Picton, Wellington. But it is not so much the military history of either side which should interest us; rather racial questions, and political and social developments.

So far from the Basques having been where they now are since the Flood (as some people seem to imagine), they are a fairly recent introduction; and they came partly as the winds come, to fill a vacuum, and partly as rivers come, by pressure. What was called later Aquitania was the Roman Province of Novempopulania—the Province of Nine Peoples (the number grew later). With the retirement of the Romans came, here as elsewhere, northern invasions, and a reversal to barbarism, compensated in part by contact with a vigorous, instead of an effete, civilization. But the Visigoths passed, as had others; and a time of unrule and misery succeeded, to be ended by the invasion of the Vascones—this time from the south. Now comes the question—who were these Vascons? They lived,

it seems, not so very far southward, perhaps along the Ebro. They possessed an ancient language, whose affinities must be sought in distant lands, and, though language and race do not necessarily go together,[1] they were probably of a different race also from their "indigenous" neighbours, and certainly possessed and possess certain characteristics and certain customs which mark them off from others, though they were not nearly so tenacious of their nationality as writers often imagine. The first wave of these Vascons did in fact, after overflowing the Pyrenees and settling down in foothills and plains, lose their identity and merge into the Franks and other Aquitanian peoples, to whom, no doubt, they contributed something of their own character. At any rate, the Vascons became Gascons; and should anyone inquire how the same name appears as Vascons, Gascons, Basques, let him consider the verb which in Greek is *ban-* (*banyo*, *baino*, I go), in Latin is *ven-* (for *gven*) and in dialect English is *gan-*. The interest of this is that the name for this mysterious people begins with a well-known Indo-European type of guttural, called the "velar," a sort of *gu-* or *gv-*, which undergoes the usual sound-transformations to which "velars" are subject. The second wave of Vascon immigration broke itself on the higher ground, and the Basques, as this second group was called, are still people of valleys and hills, and have, owing to their comparative isolation, retained their language, type, and customs. The Vascons, as a whole, were strong and united enough to deal Charlemagne a shrewd blow at Roncesvalles in 778, a defeat become famous in legend and song.

The Spanish side of Vasconia was, practically, Navarre,

[1] See below, page 48, where if I seem to have laboured the point, I can only say, after reading many writers on Basque origins, that it needs labouring.

with some of Aragon, divided (later) into its *merindades* (Pamplona, Estella, Olite, Sanguesa, Tudela); on the French side, apart from Gascony, were the three Basque divisions of Labourd (presumably the coast), French Navarre, and Soule. French or Basse Navarre was made up of Mixe, Arberoue, Ostabaret, and Size, while Soule was Upper and Lower (lower means, as with Navarre, more northern), and in the middle was Arbeilles. Important places were in Labourd, Bayonne, St. Jean, and Ustaritz, in Navarre, St. Jean-Pied-de-Port and Baigorry, in Soule, Mauléon and Tardets.

Labourd was once part of the Kingdom of Pampeluna, but became a viscounty about 1020, as did Soule. Navarre had rather a special history.

Let it be remembered to our credit that though, in exercising our just claim to Aquitania, we inevitably brought conflict and bloodshed, yet, when we had a chance, we governed well and much to the profit and general benefit of the Aquitanians. France, in fact, is not quite grateful enough to us for much valuable development at rather a critical epoch of history. The wars themselves we will not follow. Suffice it that France came at length into her own, and soon enough brought her own wars, followed by the so-called Wars of Religion, and then the Revolution and the wars of the First Empire. Soule and Labourd were merged into Béarn and Gascony. Navarre had a heroic independence, and as the result of many intrigues and some murders the Viscounts of Béarn became her royal house, whose chief, Catherine, was married to Jean d'Albret, and between them lost Upper Navarre to Spain. Henry, their son, inherited Lower Navarre and the estates of Foix and Béarn, and his marriage increased these domains. The history of Henry and Marguerite de Valois is touched upon in the account of Pau. It was their grandson, Henry III of

Navarre, who became Henry IV of France, and as soon as possible assembled and absorbed the various lordships which he held to the French Crown. This union (from which Navarre itself was for a time excluded) brought peace and prosperity to the often turbulent Basque provinces, but the Revolution, and the marchings and countermarchings of the Peninsular War, were to throw the westernmost part of the Basque provinces into distress again.

It may not usually be known that Henry VIII had ideas of re-establishing English domination, if not over Aquitaine, at least over Navarre. His father-in-law for the moment was John of Aragon, and an English expeditionary force landed at Pasages near San Sebastian; but as they did not quite "hit it off" with the Spanish troops, while John, perhaps, did not reckon too strongly on his temporary relationship, nothing came of the business but some waste of the taxpayers' money. But it was not to ward off Henry's troops but the Spaniards, who had occupied part of Labourd, that the inventive Basques lashed their knives to their muskets about 1636.

The Basques were always a people most tenacious of their rights. Under the English occupation an inquiry was made into these rights, and they seem to have been respected. Gathered together, these rights were known as "fors"; and there could be particular "fors," as of a set of communes or valleys, as well as "fors" of the whole district or province. There were special regulations affecting the "Cagots" or leprous population, and the gypsies, who were expelled from Spain by Philip II.

With privileges went responsibilities, and this very important border outpost against Spain had to be guarded by special forces and levies; and strongholds, such as St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, had to be maintained. Wayfarers will note in apparently unimportant places heavily built

houses and remains of strong walls. These all testify to the obvious strategic value of any settlement near the passes. The coast road was difficult to defend thus; solid bodies of armed men were the best kind of fortress. To each stronghold on one side of the frontier would correspond a similar stronghold on the other. The Bidassoa, whose mid-current was used for friendly meetings, was the dividing-line in time of hostility. Fuenterrabia and Hendaye give an obvious example of these pairs of fortresses. There would be encroachments, and one side would for a time build or hold forts in the enemy's country. The Spaniards once so held St. Jean-de-Luz. Of the castles on the French side many are now ruined or almost gone, others have disappeared or have been built into more peaceful habitations.

The Basques have always been a religious people to the verge of superstition, and they have certain peculiarities, whether in the galleries of their churches, reserved for men, or in their tombstones, which form a special study. Though some of the tribe found it easy to merge their nationality, those who retained it have retained it *con amore*. Their law of primogeniture applies to girls as well as boys; they have no Salic law. This splits up their families, but the family tie holds firm none the less. I cannot say if it holds in the Basque provinces, but it does elsewhere along the Pyrenees, that where a village has a special and valuable industry outsiders can only join in through marriage with one of the village girls. Both sexes are strong, and the men good fighters, which perhaps accounts for their excellence in Rugby football. Certain ancient processions and so on linger on in Basque land, and it is said that the church dancing, so rare now, can still be seen at Bidarray in the octave of Corpus Christi.

The Basque was not above giving a good deal of trouble to the stranger in his gates or in his passes; notably the

pilgrims on their way to Spain, who had to be protected by special rest-houses, as at Roncevaux; nor had he any objection—and perhaps we may say, nor has he any—to doing a little in the way of contraband. If you live on a frontier the temptation is great.

They are none the less a healthy people, and as a rule most agreeable to visitors, though I have met some of the dourer sort. They, like the Provençals, have their religious plays—the Pastorals—and their games and dances are of Provençal type, save for their national game of pelota. The dances are chiefly for men, and if women join in, they dance apart. Besides pelota proper, they have other ball games of the pelota type. Their music and drama are still elementary, and their architecture simple but adequate. The houses of Soule differ from the rest, having undergone some influence from the Béarnais types.[1]

In all discussions upon Basque origins, race and language must be kept distinct. On the whole, there is no strong dividing-line between the Basques, physically, and their neighbours. Language can be acquired in a comparatively short period where one race comes under domination of another. It is even possible that the race which at one time is able to impose its language may later on weaken and die out. You may therefore get a people without its language, or a language without its people.

The language spoken by the Basques is certainly an isolated survival. The Basques themselves are not distinct from other Europeans by any decisive factor. But it is true that, when we make up the sum-total of their charac-

[1] I have consulted various works on the Basques, and have endeavoured to observe them and their customs also on the spot. In the above, however, I make some use of a good summary in Nogaret's *Petite Histoire* (Bayonne).

teristics, they do definitely stand apart from their neighbours, and that they have most certainly a very strong sense of nationality.

Those who desire to study their language, folk-lore, etc., must obtain the works of M. J. Vinson, especially his *Essai d'une Bibliographie de la Langue Basque*. But other books give some sort of account of their characteristics and their folk-lore; one of the latter is Webster's *Basque Legends*, which reveals to us nothing very particular or special to the Basques alone. Their folk-tales, however, are not without interest. The usual types of plot to which we grow pleasantly accustomed in our children's tales—the Cinderella plot, the three wishes, the "idiot" whose native innocence brings him through tight places—reappear in the Basque legends. Animal stories of the universal sort also appear. There is the fox, who desires to be ferried across a stream, and when the ferryman demands his fare, cries: "If you would make money by ferrying—and in truth you need a new pair of trousers—you must ferry richer people than I am"—a repartee we would often ourselves like to bring off—and with one bound is off and away.

There are, however, two Basque specialities: their ogres and their fairies. The ogres—called Tartaro—are our old friends the Cyclops, and always find a Ulysses to fool them. Could we but prove that Tartaro is the same word as the race-name Tartar, we could swim in a sea of pleasing speculation; but the reduplicated word is almost certainly indicative of noise, the sort of noise which any reasonable ogre might make: "fe fo fi fum," or something to the same effect.

In some aspects of the Tartaro he resembles (as Mr. Webster acutely notes) the "Lubbar Fiend" sung by Milton.

The seven-headed serpent or hydra needs no comment,

except for its geographical tastes; the head of the clan laid his head on the top of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, his neck lay towards Barèges, his body in the valley of Luz and Gedres, and his tail was neatly coiled up, like a shipshape rope, in the Cirque of Gavarnie. He was a gross feeder, but only ate four times a year, and—fortunately for the neighbouring villages—never between his meals. He was ultimately charred to death by the overgreedy swallowing of a subtly prepared mess of molten iron, and the rivers he despairingly drank went to form the Lac d'Isabit.

The villain in various stories is a charcoal-burner, and he meets an appropriate end, being set on a barrel of gunpowder (which appears in certain Basque tales) and blown up with the application of some of his own charcoal—so that he is neatly hoist with his own petard.

The Basque fairies have pleasant ways, and in some ways are indeed distinct from our common Celtic and Teutonic brand. They are builders, like Mélusine, and like her they even build churches, though they cannot abide the sound of church bells. A little heavier than Shakespeare's fairies, they do not dance or sport by moonlight. There are two quite unpleasant sprites or elves, if indeed we should not term them fauns or satyrs—Basa-Jauna and his wife Basa-Andre, who, however, sometimes adopts the more delicate pose of a mermaid. The ordinary fairies often act as godmothers.

One rather remarkable tale given by Mr. Webster is of a certain Malbrouk, in whom one would like to see a legendary growth from our Duke of Marlborough; but he is probably an Eastern djin or devil.

The tales are worth reading, and Mr. Webster's collection is enriched by the tales recounted to him by two sisters, with the almost fairy names of Estefanella and Gagnahaurra Hirigaray.

Really peculiar to the Basques—at least to the French Basques—are their cult of the dead and their games and dances. Their tombs and cemeteries (and here tradition will longest linger) are the subjects of special study; the tombstones have traditional symbols inscribed, and some of these, as well as the shapes of the stones, are thought to run back into a great antiquity. Ancient, no doubt, also is the custom of lighting little twisted candles, during church services, in memory of all persons who have died during the year, except children. The family looks after these lamps, and someone is expected to pray before them daily. A lamp (or as they call it, "little sepulchre") is kept in its place two years for the nearer, and one year for the remoter, relatives.

As soon as we think of Basque games, the word pelota (which merely means "a ball") springs to every mind. What is important to remember is that there are many games of pelota. Here is neither space nor place to discuss them all. But the games vary according to the size and nature of the court, the weapon used, and the rules of the game. Just as we have tennis courts, Rugby fives courts, Eton fives courts, racquet courts, squash-racquet courts, so the Basques, though generally keeping to a type, have various courts. Just as we have (rarely) fives played with the bare hand, fives played with gloves, and tennis and squash played with racquets, so the Basques have pelota played with the hand, with the leather shield, with the basket, the wooden bat, and (rarely) with the racquet.

Usually pelota is in the open air, but it may be played in a *trinquet*, or covered court. The word *fronton*, often used for the court, really means only the big end (or side) wall. The *chistera*, or osier scoop, is the favourite weapon. The actual ground is called the *cancha*, and is cemented. Sometimes there is a net, as in lawn tennis. In some games the

ball must be shot from the *chistera* as soon as received; in some it may be held a moment in the socket of the *chistera*. This latter kind of game is not favoured, except in some exhibition games.

I have myself only seen the Guipuscoan variety, played in a *grand fronton* (Jai-Alai at Saint-Sébastien); four players with *chisteras*, the ball being taken near the hand, then (marvellously) made to run to the end of the *chistera* and thence shot out like a bullet. On the *cancha* were marked spaces or "homes," and these played an important part in the game. Moreover, there appeared to me to be a sort of "good calx" and a "bad calx," as in the Eton wall-football. The arrangement of these spaces of "calxes" can be used to handicap a weak side. One match I saw at Saint-Sébastien was between two celebrated sides (the home side was one); on entering I was offered (at a price) a favour of a certain colour by a singularly alluring young lady, and later on I found that I was "barracking" for the visitors, who had committed some sad breach of pelota etiquette. I was jeered at, and I think howled at; but jeers and howls were lost in the terrific noise made by the bookmakers, who yelled their prices during the rallies—the only kind of betting that I should be inclined to call really sporting.

Any fives, racquet, or tennis player will soon understand the strokes; the best is to get the angle of the court in such a way that the ball practically drops dead. There is a puzzling business in marking a *chasse* by laying a tree-twig where the ball, having outwitted one side, goes out of court; here, too, there is something similar to the Eton wall-football, where the touching down of a ball, out of bounds, gives advantage of space to the toucher. The *chasse* marks the limit between the two sides. The remarkable thing is that this excellent game has not, in some form or other, been imported into our own country.

As for the dances, mascarades, and pastorales, they are of great interest, but not really unique, though the Basques have very highly developed all three. Mascarades are an odd mixture of ballets, processions, and mimicry. The musical instruments are pleasantly primitive.

We do not like, when wayfaring in a pleasant country, to be reminded (as travel-writers too often remind us) of bloody murders, or of men-destroying campaigns. But the western end of the Pyrenees is so closely bound up with an episode of our military history of unusual splendour that a short note is appropriate and wise. One may reasonably say that events here in 1814 determined the issue of the Flanders campaign of 1815. The map will need consulting if the story is to be made clear.

Wellington's successes in Spain had thoroughly alarmed Napoleon, and, after the inglorious Joseph's defeat at Vittoria, Soult, an opponent almost worthy of Wellington, was sent as Commander in Spain. He found things in a bad way. Pampelune (or Pamplona) and Saint-Sébastien were being besieged; the French were retreating by the Roncevaux valley. Still, the French General Clausel got himself and his troops out of a bad scrape by reaching Saragossa, a fine achievement, not wholly due to the bad roads which hampered the heavier English troops and the curious dislike which the English infantryman had (perhaps still has) to rapid pursuit after victory. But it was excusable. The English in less than six weeks had done miracles of marching, crossing rivers, and attack. The allies were now (at the end of 1813) on the Pyrenees; King Joseph was disgraced; Foy and Clausel were, for the time, scattered. Wellington's own strategy was as great as were his difficulties. Far from help or support, should any disaster occur, he yet took wise risks; hampered by the constant

marauding of his own troops, who seem to have scattered at will, he yet could concentrate for a telling blow at the right place.

Saint-Sébastien was necessary for him, to make sure of his base. Throwing out O'Donnel's troops to watch Pampeluna, he struck hard at the seaport.

By July 5th (1814) an English fleet was at the entrance to the harbour of Saint-Sébastien; but hardy mariners from St. Jean-de-Luz and Ciboure managed to slip into the bay, and so into the besieged city. In Graham's chief assault an English column was cut to pieces, on which the French immediately sallied to render first aid and to take to their own hospitals the English wounded, carrying them on their own siege-ladders. The news at this moment reached Wellington that Soult was well on the way to St. Jean-Pied-de-Port; he left therefore troops for a blockade, and took off as many of Graham's men as could be spared.

Byng's brigade was on the allied right, and held the Col de Roncevaux; Soult, by a movement which Wellington supposed a feint, forced the pass, or would have forced it, but that he was caught in a two days' Pyrenean mist, and dared not move. He did, however, force the English to fall back from the Col de Maya, near St. Étienne de Baigorry, and so pushed on to Pampeluna. There was a dramatic moment when Wellington, having arrived suddenly to review the position, came in sight of his troops, and was cheered to the echo, with Soult standing almost within hailing distance. The view which Soult had of his great adversary and his disposition was enough to show him that swift action was his only chance; he fought, and failed, in what was called the battle of Sauroren, on July 28th. By August 2nd the British were again on the Cols de Maya and de Roncevaux. Soult meanwhile strengthened Bayonne, Navarreux, and St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, Wellington

THE BRIDGE, ORTHEZ

turning aside to capture Saint-Sébastien, whose heroic defence ended in a terrible scene of pillage, incendiarism, and massacre.

October found the British across the Bidassoa, and Soult only able to keep in position by the supplies which slipped through the British fleet on the Bayonne estuary. He held, actually, a crescent between Urugne and Cambo. Wellington observed a weak spot in the French lines, and by November 10th he held Urugne, Sarre St. Pé, and Espelette, and was only prevented by shortness of numbers from cutting off the French right. On December 9th Hill crossed the Nive between Cambo and Itxassou, and Soult fell back on Bayonne. But it was all like a game of chess between experts. Soult even in his retreat observed the gaps between the British wings and turned to the attack. But for some reason (perhaps the state of the roads) he chose the wrong point, and Hope's brigade (Hope himself had been wounded) beat the French off; the same happened in two further attacks, and finally the battle of St. Pierre completed the French defeat.

Still the coping-stone remained to be set on the structure; and now began the great movement which culminated in the battle of Orthez.

Wellington's difficulties were beyond all surmounting by any ordinary general. Calumnies from the Spaniards, pillage by his soldiers, shortage of pay, difficult roads, bad weather—these were a few of them. We must read his despatches and letters (and how ever did he find time to write them?) to understand a tithe of his problems. The battle of Waterloo may not have been won on the playing-fields of Eton, but it was won largely off the field of action. Wellington's generals were a band of devoted heroes like Nelson's captains. In a different way—a very different way—he breathed into them the same inspiration.

In the beginning of 1814 the allies' line ran from the sea through Ustaritz towards the Upper Adour. Bayonne threatened the left flank, should the army make a move. To hold Bayonne in check the Adour must be crossed, and that too below Bayonne. This Soult believed impossible, and therefore (we may almost say "therefore") Wellington crossed it. Boats were brought up, but everything was done to suggest a crossing above Bayonne. Hill threatened Soult's left; Hope watched his right. The crossing, fixed for February 21st, was delayed by storms, but in the evening of the 23rd a small party crossed, and drove two French battalions back into the town. The Admiral, Penrose, facing untold difficulties, got his ships up within three miles of Bayonne; the bridge was ready on the 26th. Wellington, on the 24th, had marched to the Gave d'Oloron, crossed it, and Soult became aware of the real nature of the movement. Here he made an error, for he concentrated at Orthez, instead of working down towards Bayonne. On his way he wrecked the bridges on the Gave de Pau, but Picton and Beresford were already across.

The French army, owing to Wellington's difficulties of approach, was strongly posted from St. Boès to Orthez. With the greatest danger—since the roads were very narrow—Beresford took St. Boès; but he could not deploy, and Soult so far got the upper hand as to cry: "Enfin, je les tiens!" For the moment he was right; but Wellington, swift as a hawk, changed in a moment his whole direction, swooped round behind St. Boès, and at once sent in Hill on his extreme right to the final attack. Hill was no whit behind; he forced the passage over the river above Orthez, and Soult, threatened from all sides, abandoned the town. Even so, he showed a swiftness not unworthy of Wellington himself, changed in a moment his line of retreat, and though his orderly withdrawal broke soon into a flight, he

got a great part of his force away. In less than three weeks Wellington had crossed five large rivers, bridged the Adour, invested Bayonne, threatened Bordeaux, and captured the depots of Dax, Aire, and Mont-de-Marsan. Victorious, he treated the French people with earnest consideration, sent for the Duc d'Angoulême, and issued proclamations calling on the French people to take their stand with their hereditary royal house.

His further movements, in which he took Vic-de-Bigorre and Tarbes, and then marched on Toulouse, lie outside the Pyrenean district proper.

CHAPTER V

A SHORT TOUR IN THE WESTERN VALLEYS

IN order to help wayfarers in the Western Pyrenees, who will certainly be the majority of my readers, to plan their road tours, I give, at the risk of some repetition, an account of one tour, suitable for about ten days, which I took in the month of April, rather to see what could be done than because a road tour is the best form of wayfaring. It is a good way, if one regards the car as a comfortable and convenient way of getting from point to point; but not a good way if the travel is too rapid, and if the rather natural tendency to stick to the car all the time, except for the night's rest, be not resisted. Obvious as this warning seems, it is still necessary. Those who go straight through in their own cars, or in the Midi autocars, merely stopping for the night, see nothing but scenery, and much of that too rapidly, and are not true wayfarers.

The tour I describe was over familiar ground; the car, a Donnet-Zedel, was equal to anything in the way of sharp turns and stiff climbs, and in summer-time could have gone anywhere, provided it had the semblance of a road before it. Its owner-driver, my old school-friend, is an expert, which means a cautious expert. One could want no more.

Seasons differ. In an early spring more could have been done, no doubt, on the heights; but the highest passes, even when accessible in spring, are not safe, owing to the loose stuff which is constantly coming down, and is perhaps more dangerous, really, than the snow avalanches. The

closed passes are marked as closed on large notice-boards upon the road. The Michelin and other guides give the usual times of opening, that is, when the road is both safe for traffic and has been cleared and made up for the summer season. Conditions of summer mountain-motoring will be found in Mr. Freeston's book, already referred to, and it must be remembered that this book describes what then was a real pioneering effort.

The tour began at Bordeaux, a city not too easy to find one's way out of. The paved way, which on the map looks the obvious one to take, is to be avoided, at least in its earlier portions. The Arcachon road through Pessac is the best to take, unless there is rain or ground-frost, when it may be, as large and candid notices proclaim it to be, very dangerous.

At Facture (unless you are taking Arcachon on the way) you turn south-east towards Belin, via Salles. Experienced motorists will not, perhaps, need to be told, what others will be grateful for, namely, that you must know the smaller places on your routes, since the signposts generally point to the next village of any reasonable size, and will not always mention the larger place to which you are steering. At Belin you pick up the direct road to Bayonne, having avoided the unsatisfactory portion between Bordeaux and Belin. The road pursues its way through the Landes, which, if they grow monotonous, are none the less interesting, and dotted with pleasant little settlements, with small farms of the chalet type, with a broad open veranda in the front. Those who want to see the Landes less sophisticated —since the little villages on this road have become or are becoming places of summer residence—may take (slowly) the more western road by the shore, and among lakes, through Biscarosse and Cap Breton. By neither route are people on stilts likely to be perceived, though I noticed a

pair leaning against a house. Alas for our nursery geography, which prepared us for all sorts of curious sights, now rare, or—too often—vanished altogether. It seemed to me that to take a chalet in the Landes—or build one's own—would be the means of a delightful rest-cure, or a pleasant retirement for literary pursuits. The turpentine-trees are all around, and they smell wholesome; the air, certainly in spring, gives a good appetite; food is no doubt to be had; the only point I do not feel sure about is the forest insects, which for my own part I dread more than vipers or wild boars, especially as the boars are not there.

Unless the motorist is in a hurry, his first stop must be (and certainly should be) in the Landes, amid the cupped trees, with their slashes of red, alternating charmingly with the black boles of the stripped cork-trees which here and there line the road.

At Castets, where we stopped, a motoring party anxiously came and inquired whether I thought the inn would be "all right." Clearly these were people who clung to their car save for descent at some international tourist hotel, who fancied brigands, night-creeping landlords, and what not. The little hotel was only marked in Michelin, it is true, with a cup and fork, which means: "Good food *et practerea nihil*"; but I have nearly always found that you must add one class in Michelin's classifications: a cup-and fork hotel should often have a house-of-one-gable (which means reasonable rooms), and a house-of-one-gable often deserves two gables. Michelin keeps on the safe side. Anyhow, we were most comfortable, and the party apparently slept in its beds, as it reappeared in full strength next morning. No, it is the big hotel (of the type of that to which they were steering) which does the robbing, and that not by marauding and armed landlords. The pen, these days, is mightier than the sword. It's the lady in the *caisse*—

and there nearly always is a lady in the *caisse*—who is the real bogy.

Dax, by the route taken, is left well to the east; Castets itself needs no special mention, save that there was once a castle there, of which a gate remains; and St. Vincent-de-Tyrosse, though a good centre for forest, lake, or coast, is too near Bayonne to be a likely stopping-place.

We passed through Bayonne, attractive enough, even when familiar, without having diverted to Cap-Breton, a growing, if not already grown, seaside resort. Nor did we permit ourselves, on this occasion, to be tempted by the oyster fisheries of the Hossegor lake. Our itinerary, chiefly determined by its main purposes, permitted diversions only in what proved a wild-goose-chase of the illustrator, who was somewhere about, either working busily or temperately regretting the sometimes intemperate weather. This chase took us, indeed, into Spain, and it may be well here to advise those not familiar with the crossing of the frontier to be prepared with both Spanish currency (for their temporary driving licence) and also those simple Spanish phrases of politeness which go a very long way, and are not really difficult to acquire, though by no means so easy to call up suddenly at the mere sight of a Spanish Custom-house, after a long spell of talking nothing but French. The Spanish frontier is often artificial, but it is very real. The Spaniards do not want to talk French, not from obstinacy or narrowness, but because they prefer the language of Calderon; nor have they any use for French coinage, being the proud owners of that excellent and opulent-feeling post-war coin, the *douro*, or five-peseta piece. Wayfarers should appreciate the feelings of their new hosts and become as Spanish as they possibly can in a moment of time. I who write this was caught unawares and babbled an inefficient hybrid which did not at all impress the

courteous (though I must add somewhat unintelligent) officials.

Returning, as we had come, by Ciboure and St. Jean-de-Luz, both, alas, with all their charms, become very town-like and noisy since I first knew them, we made for Ustaritz, having private business with one of its citizens, and had the opportunity to see the interior of a great Basque house, now cut up into apartments. Beautiful indeed are the Basque houses of Ustaritz; pleasant are its surroundings, pleasant is the Nive, as it runs through it; a wealthy little place it is, and one can hear plenty of Anglo-Saxon talked, since its inhabitants are fond of going to work for a time in America. I was, indeed, awoken in the morning by hearing my neighbour singing songs in liquid, if broken, American—not, I fear, in his bath.

From Ustaritz we made for Cambo, lying under its sister on the hill, Cambo-les-Bains: a pretty, tidy—too tidy—all-the-year resort, with its one old street above the Nive, and its Basque church, with its galleries and its gloomy-mottoed sundial (*Dubia omnibus, ultima multis*—such is the warning it gives to the hurrying motorist—"The hour which passes is for many the last, for all uncertain."). Thence to Itxassou, an old Basque village, odd as its name, with glorious mountain views (near by is the cleft, or one of the clefts, supposed to have been cut by Roland's sword; the old track ran under the arch of the rock). Bidarray has a fine old bridge, and groups itself prettily in the circle of the foothills; and St. Étienne-de-Baigorry has another *pons asinorum*, or "donkey-back" bridge, while at the village of Mitchelenia close by are said to dwell some descendants of the mysterious *cagots*.

From St. Étienne we went by Aldudes and Irrouléguy, noted for its wine, to St. Jean-Pied-de-Port. This is an interesting bit of road, especially the earlier part, which

is very much up and down, and decidedly twisty, for we took a short cut, joining the main road not long before Irrouléguy. St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, which possesses two Basque names besides its French one, is one of the most picturesque of many picturesque little Pyrenean towns; it has fine old houses and a good bridge, and is crowned by its citadel, which by comparison with the old town is modern, being of the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Rue d'Espagne, which leads to the Roncevaux road, is especially charming. Up the Roncevaux road we went, and were soon caught, after crossing the frontier at Arnéguy, in a real Pyrenean thunderstorm with terrific rain, during which we wisely bowed to Fate and lunched snugly beneath our hood. When the weather improved we turned and twisted up the sharp incline through Valcarlos to the Col d'Ibañeta (or of Roncevaux)—a glorious drive between rocks and fine trees, descending to the village of Roncevaux, where we found children snowballing. Here we were well on the way to Aoitz and Pampeluna, and but for the storm we should have gone some way down the descent into the Spanish valleys.

Roncevaux is renowned for the Basque victory over Charlemagne's rearguard, but exactly where the French were caught and overwhelmed by boulders and stones, no one now can say. As memorials of the disaster there remain a ruined chapel, called "of Charlemagne," on the pass itself, and at Roncevaux the little chapel of the Holy Spirit, burial-place of pilgrims going to or from the tomb of Sant' Iago de Compostela and reputed burial-place of the slaughtered paladins of Charlemagne, for whom masses are still said. The great convent, once fourth in pre-eminence in the world, was formerly the centre of a great military order. The church, dark as are most Spanish churches, possesses most rare images and relics, among which is the weeping

Madonna, whose tears are diamonds, to say nothing of supposed relics of Roland himself.

The last great battle near the pass I have mentioned above; its known history, as a bone of military contention, spreads from the days of Charlemagne to those of Soult.

Running comfortably down the French side again, and gently round the constant bends, we made along the Bidassoa valley to St. Palais, which fortunately has only one Basque name, once a royal (Navarre) centre, now of less account, if larger, than the very picturesque place which comes next down the valley, Sauveterre-de-Béarn, near the junction of the Saison and the Gave d'Oloron, both charming rivers, but actually lying on the right bank of the Gave, except for the railway station, which upholds the French tradition of keeping out of the way. A fragment of the old bridge remains; and in view of the campaign of Soult and Wellington in these parts, we may understand how grateful we should be for any bridge, or bit of one, dating before 1814, so many having been (in the vivid French phrase) "caused to jump" by the one side, while the other was feverishly building new ones in impossible places, or courageously doing without them.

Sauveterre has parts of her walls and her gates still, remains of her castle and its keep, her old church, and arcaded houses in the chief *place*. But even Sauveterre is in turn eclipsed by Salies-de-Béarn, which follows the example of other watering-places by keeping its new part distinct from the old. Its waters are salt, and are indeed happily employed in curing not only sick people but wholesome hams. Its old bridge and old houses (half covered with wistaria in April), winding streets, the so-called house of Jeanne d'Albret (the real one was on the site), the actual house of Henri of Navarre (Maison Lafont), all make up

SALIES-DE-BÉARN

so charming a little town, that we can forgive the modern hotels (one of which is, indeed, a transformation of the old château), public garden, and casino.

Thence (leaving to the left Puyoo) we went on to Orthez, another noted picturesque town, with its bridge, whose central tower still stands solid, and many delightful old houses (chiefly in the Rue Bourg Vieux), one of which is also a house of Jeanne d'Albret. In Orthez you may tread where Froissart trod, about the remains of the Moon Hotel, and—if you wish—near where Gaston Phœbus slew both brother and son in the Tour Moncade. Not far off is a memorial to General Foy, wounded on the spot for the fourteenth time; farther north is St. Boès, which was an important pivot in the battle of Orthez.

Our next day began from Orthez, whence we headed south once more. Navarrenx is a very interesting example of a sixteenth-century fortified town, for, as we now see it, it is the work of Henri d'Albret, though the almost inevitable Vauban went over and modernized the fortifications. Mauléon has an ancient stronghold on its hill, and an especially fine Renaissance house (Hôtel d'Andurrain). Not far off (through Licq-Atherey) are the wonderful gorges of Cacoëta, which may be followed, southward from Ste Engrâce, almost to the frontier pass. We turned east, however, at Tardets, an excellent centre for several good valleys, besides the gorges just mentioned. From Lanne one may enter one of the "Vallées" which formerly had independent rights, like those of Andorra to-day, the Val de Barétous.

From Tardets we reached Aramits, a little place of no particular distinction, save what the snow-ridged mountains in the near distance confer on any Pyrenean foothill town or village—or even pigsty. From Aramits, after some pleasant *lacets*, we entered the Aspe valley and made for

the still-closed Somport, along a perfectly straight road leading to a glorious mass of mountains, then in heavy mist. When we were well on the way to Urdos this mist turned to heavy rain, and this, with the discovery that a raincoat was, like John Gilpin's hat and wig, upon the road (possibly somewhere near Aramits), caused us to turn back and ultimately to put into port at Oloron-Sainte-Marie, most pleasing spot, with one of the best general views of the range (from the Pau road) which can be seen anywhere. The old town—Sainte-Croix, for Oloron, like many places, is divided into three parts—is of a beautiful feudal type, with a quaint square behind it, whence you get two distinct views of the range, one seen through a delightful descending street. Sainte-Marie is named from its cathedral, or what was formerly a cathedral, which goes back to the eleventh century, and has a fine twelfth-century doorway, with quaint sculptures and little caryatids, which represent bound captives.

North of Oloron-Sainte-Marie, on the way to Navarrenx and Sauveterre, was formerly one of those odd little political unities which have survived in certain ceremonies and appearances of liberty here and there in the Pyrenees, but only retained independence (and that rather shorn) in the valleys of Andorra. This little unity was called the Josbaig, or valleys of the Joos, and is partly covered by the forest of the same name. Moumour, Orin, Gérouce, and Préchacq-Josbaig are some of its communes.

From Oloron we made our way up the Gave d'Ossau, whose valleys were once also an assemblage of independent communities, over which the Count of Béarn had some suzerainty, for which he had to swear loyalty to the ancient rights of the valley. Its old capital is Bielle, which remains distinguished by ancient houses, old sculptures, and some quite old mosaics, presumably Roman.

Laruns, however, is perhaps the most characteristic Ossau village; on great festivals (such as the Assumption) may still be seen picturesque costumes and customs, and there may be heard odd, if not over-harmonious, pastoral musical instruments. All sorts of interesting excursions and ascents can be made from Laruns.

On through Eaux-Chaudes and Gabas we pursued our way up towards the pass, over very broken parts of road, till we were literally stopped by the avalanches which lay across the road, some mixed and some of clean snow. Here we left the car, which fortunately had just room to turn, and went on foot, till progress became undesirable and difficult. Right ahead and quite close (as it seemed) was the Pic du Midi d'Ossau, and far along the road we made out what our eyes certainly took for a derelict car, having apparently attempted a late crossing in vain. We turned back with the satisfaction of having got as near to the Pourtalet pass as could be, till it is officially and finally opened. Looking in at Eaux-Bonnes on our downward way, we made northward and then east through Bruges—so called, no doubt, from its fine Roman bridge—and here we got completely lost; and then at length through Betharram to Lourdes, Argelès and Pierrefitte—all this run from Oloron in a single day.

It was, I think, at Pierrefitte (this common type of name seems to point to some menhir or dolmen) that I had a capital example of French economy. Waste not, want not. For dinner we had some capital lamb cutlets; in the garage, in the morning, I recognized one of my cutlet bones in the hands and in the mouth of the little daughter of the house, while hard by gazed the family's dog, like the dog in the idyll of Theocritus: "Vowing that it would soon leave her breakfastless", the while she in childish prattle bade the dog to wait his turn, which indeed duly came, and the final

crunchings of the small bone told that it was for the third time making somebody happy.

Further wanderings (for we were on familiar ground) took us on this tour no farther south than Cauterets, and our northward route lay through Tarbes and Aire.

April touring means chiefly north and south running; the cross-roads (such as that of the Col d'Aubisque) are not yet open. But one gets an excellent idea of the long and ever-narrowing Pyrenean valleys, and there is something especially pleasing in approaching the mountains direct.

At Lourdes, leaving aside other familiar sights, I made a special study of the regional museum, well housed in the castle, which is worth a visit for itself.

CHAPTER VI

EASTWARD TO BAGNÈRES DE BIGORRE

PROBABLY the greater number of Pyrenean visitors enter through Dax and Pau. The next important valley to that which St. Jean-Pied-de-Port used to guard is that which runs south from Mauléon, itself reached from Orthez. Those who do not know Orthez will at least have heard of it in connection with Wellington, who beat Soult here in 1814. Many others will have seen pictures of the bridge with its tower in the middle and its irregular arches. Orthez is a place of tragedy: the tragedy of the Capuchins, cast by the Calvinists from the bridge-tower; the tragedy of the son of Gaston de Foix, that most unsatisfactory person who, thanks to the lavish spending of money and to the glamour of time, has somehow captivated the writers on Pyrenean history. The Tour Moncade remains from the old castle, and pretty, high-gabled houses are grouped about its foot. If the "murder" of the boy was accidental, at least it was caused by Gaston's cruel and ill temper. He is not worth whitewash. The murder of the brave Keeper of the Castle of Lourdes, at least, was no accident. It also happened here. A beautiful corner is made by the house of Jeanne d'Albret, with a picturesque turret.

Orthez, though visited by many tourists who have heard of the bridge, is still of a simple mind. The illustrator's sketching-stool had been damaged; a shop was ultimately found which thought it could do the repair; and after it was done, the shopman refused to take a penny, explaining

that it was, after all, a simple job. A little gift to a small child was permitted. Orthez must mend its ways; this will never do.

Moreover, at the bank they had never seen (what most of us have, at any rate, seen in a glass case) a five-pound note, and thought it was a kind of draft or cheque. It may be worth explaining to travellers that, in any case, French banks do not much care for five-pound notes, as they have to send them off to Paris at once.

At Orthez we found one of those fairs to which anyone may bring whatever he or she likes, but from which everyone must absolutely and without exception take away a small pig with a string tied to its left hind-leg. It is shows of this kind that reveal the tourist, whose insularity is sadly bewrayed by his piglessness.

Navarrenx, which lies on the way to Mauléon, has an old bridge, a very fine old gate, and fortifications rebuilt by Vauban. It has not burst into celebrity these days, being a little far off the mountains and without the attractions which have made Pau. It lies, however, on the Gave (or Stream) d'Oloron, with a pretty valley running down to Sauveterre. There is, on the way, a regular "Loire" château at Anhaux, of seventeenth-century origin. If we go north-west from Sauveterre we shall find Sorde, with a beautiful ruined abbey and a Roman mosaic (in the choir of the church); and farther west is Bidache, once a little principality, and there are some remains still of the Grammont castle. But we are making for the mountains, and on our way is Mauléon, with a fifteenth-century castle, whence there is a fine view over the Gave. Here you can see the making of espadrilles (rope-soled shoes), for which Spanish workers are imported.

From Mauléon, and still better from Tardets, can be made a whole series of excursions into the valleys; especially

must be mentioned the gorges of Cacoëta, just before you reach Ste Engrâce; or from Larrau there is the defile of Holcarté. For both of these expeditions it is wise to inquire at the starting-point or at Licq-Atherey. These valleys, and the two next eastward valleys, of which the second is the long valley of the Aspe, deserve much more attention from travellers than they have received. To reach the Val d'Aspe one would naturally start from Oloron or St. Christau. At Oloron the Aspe and the Ossau, the next eastward *gave*, join, and so accessible a centre has not been lost to industry, a new town having sprung up, independent of Ste Croix, the old Oloron. This makes an excellent opportunity to study town development; often the feudal town is merely overbuilt with modern work; but there are several good places in the Pyrenees, as on the Riviera, where the feudal town remains quite untouched by the side of the modern one. The church of Ste Croix has a curious cupola, and that of Ste Marie a fine Romanesque door, with radiating figures of the "twenty-four elders," each playing an instrument. In the town of Ste Croix are many interesting old houses, and a fine old street (Labarraque) from which you see the Anie group of peaks. St. Christau, south of Oloron, is a well-known bathing centre, and a nearer centre for the Vallée d'Aspe, which might well have become a *vallée* in the political sense, a "Vallée et Souverainté" as of Andorra. The valley begins really with Bedous, but Accous is really the centre of the little group of valley villages. It is the best taking-off place for the ascent of the Pic d'Anie (over 7,000 feet). Farther south is Urdos, a first-class climbing centre; and thence one crosses the Somport (port means *col* or pass, as in St. Jean-Pied-de-Port), and so to Jaca. This road is a great road right through the mountains, and is good for walking, even bicycling, and any sort of vehicle. Jaca itself is a pleasing place, and

has good hotels. Motorists who are going over either the Somport or the Col du Pourtalet,[1] the parallel passes crossing the ridge, will do well to read Mr. Freeston's notes.[2] One can, of course, make the round run Oloron to Laruns by Jaca, and the Bains de Panticosa can be visited as well; but despite their setting, they seem a rather dreary "establishment."

The valley of Ossau may be reached from Oloron, but it belongs geographically to Arudy and Pau. We will therefore begin with the great capital of Béarn, a place where English people can stay with much comfort and pleasure, either (according to their preference) quietly and French fashion, or surrounding themselves with the sundry amusements and "occupations" of those who like to travel without "going abroad."

The first valley of Béarn, eastward of the Basque country, is that of the Vert, or the Vallée de Barétous, where the Béarn cattle are pastured. But the chief memories of Béarn, though it be a country of valleys and pastures, have always centred in Pau, and its history is entirely intermingled with that of Navarre. Henry II of Navarre is their first hero—a hero with many faults, but just the sort that appealed to the popular idea, and a not uncommon example of the extreme popularity of a prince who makes himself also one of the people. Queen Marguerite is famous, too, among queens; and her *Heptameron*, which blends strangely with her treatises of piety, wins her a sort of name in literature. At least the Farmer-King and his bride (she was scolded for going to live in "inclement" Pau) worked quite deliberately and thoughtfully for

[1] In Mr. Belloc's book, p. 217, Tourmalet seems to occur for Pourtalet. The Tourmalet is between Luz and Bagnères de Bigorre.

[2] *The Passes of the Pyrenees*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.

the welfare of their people. Northern—that is, more skilled—labour was imported; industries were started. Though no Huguenot, Marguerite received and protected persecuted Huguenots, apparently out of sheer kindheartedness. Her indecent *Heptameron* was partly written or collected at Sarrance, when she and a party were held up by floods from reaching Pau. At Pau was born Henry IV, and he was brought up in Béarnais fashion, by the order of his grandfather. All visitors to Pau will learn, if they do not know already, the story of Henry II rubbing garlic on his infant grandson's lips and pouring a drop of wine of Jurançon down his throat—a likely story enough. If the grandfather was Béarn's first hero, the grandson is the second, and the greater. Despite its castle and its memories, Pau was nothing very great till its equable winter climate attracted English visitors, and since then Pau has always had a large English colony. The castle is in the grand style; a fortress was altered and enlarged and refortified by Gaston Phœbus of Foix; Marguerite of Valois had alterations made and decorations done; these decorations are in part the work of Italians. The castle is about all that is left of old or picturesque Pau, save for the castle's immediate surroundings; but the castle redeems Pau from mere modernity, and makes up for a great deal, both by its external dignity and its interior beauty. The Gobelin and other tapestries are the greatest of the castle's treasures. The tortoise-shell cradle of Henry IV—of which, however, despite the well-known story, one cannot be too sure—is shown in the room in which it is thought that Henry was born. Part of the castle is kept for the nucleus of a Béarnais museum, which with the museum of Lourdes, arranged by the French Touring Club, gives one an excellent idea of Pyrenean bygones.

The chief feature, however, of Pau is its entirely marvel-

lous view of the range, from Bigorre to the Pic d'Anie, easily one of the most wonderful views of the world. It is the pastime of visitors to learn off the hills and peaks, of which the Pic du Midi d'Ossau is very much the easiest to acquire. This famous view of the peaks from Pau is dependent, however, as all of us are, on the weather; no vision of them appeared on our last visit. Pau is cheap if you know your way about; here is a lunch for 2s. 4d. of our money: *hors d'œuvre, foie de veau, poulet rôti, champignons, pommes nouvelles* (it was Easter-time), *fromage, dessert.*

Despite its distance from the actual peaks, Pau is a wonderful centre for almost everywhere in the western range. Possibly those who have listened to the story of the birth of Henry IV will hasten to Jurançon, close by, continuing their walk to take in some other place of interest.

Apart from Irrouléguy, the chief wine-producing districts of the Pyrenees are round Pau; at Jurançon in especial, but also in the district called by the odd name of Vic-Bilh, sometimes Vicq-Binlh, of which the first part means "Vicus," or district; as for Binlh, it is the name of a former little political unity, like the Josbaig near Oloron. The true Jurançon district runs down as far as Gau. The other wine centres are at Monein and at Lembeye. The Vic-Bilh region centres about Pontacq, and is watered by streams running to the Adour or the Gave de Pau. The vine grows in small parcels of land, stretching north to Carlin; the valley of Ariès produces a celebrated brand, and most of these are classed under the commune of Lembeye.

Morlaàs is of special interest. The name Béarn comes from Bencharnum, which was near Lescar (remarkable for its Romanesque cathedral). When Bencharnum was destroyed by the Moors, Morlaàs took over the chieftainship of Béarn. It is remarkable for its church door, the church itself being good, but much of it later than the door.

Here, as at Sainte-Marie d'Oloron, the twenty-four elders radiate round the arch. There is an ancient crypt under the choir of the church. Morlaàs was important enough to set a standard of coinage and to create a staple wine-measure.

Longer excursions from Pau are those of the valleys, particularly of the valley of the Gave de Pau. But the Vallée d'Ossau comes first. It runs right up to the Pic du Midi d'Ossau, through the fine gorge of Eaux-Chaudes. Bielle was the capital of the valley, which was once rather more independent, perhaps, than is Andorra to-day. There we can find old houses, ancient columns, the old box with the Ossau charter, a ruined guest-house for the Compostella pilgrims. Here, and at Laruns, one may yet see the traditional costumes of Ossau, certainly on the Feast of the Assumption, that day when one wants to be in twenty places at once. It is said that kilt skirts and flesh-pink stockings should be ousting, or have ousted, these old costumes, which are very often too heavy for ordinary wear. As for skirts, many of these old costume skirts are already short enough to suit the most fashionable among the valley girls; they will lose little, or nothing, in stocking by keeping the old garb.

Laruns is perhaps the best centre for this valley, for those who do not stay at one or other of the Eaux. There are ascents in plenty to make; in fact, almost wherever you go you must ascend something, if not necessarily one of the more serious climbs, as is that of the Pic du Midi d'Ossau, which in appearance is usually compared to the Matterhorn, or that of the Balaïtous, which is described by Mr. Spender in good detail. The view from the summit must be one of the most majestic, outside the Alps, in Europe.

Eaux-Bonnes is a winter-sport centre as well as a very sheltered place during the cold winds of spring and autumn. It has been known from very early times for its waters,

and was used as a military hospital after the battle of Pavia in 1525. Eaux-Chaudes, near by, is rather shut in, and is a smaller place. Gabas, higher up, is developing, and Mr. Belloc is in ecstasy over its hotel (Des Pyrénées), which I do not know. It is from Gabas that the ascent of the Midi d'Ossau and Balaïtous can best be made; one must in any case halt at Gabas, and thence also one reaches Panticosa by the Col de Pourtalet and Sallent. From Eaux-Bonnes one may reach Argelès by the Col d'Aubisque, of which Mr. Freeston makes little trouble, though parts of this road require especially careful driving. It is now the regular run of the autocars of the Compagnie du Midi. From either Pau or Tarbes, Argelès is reached through Lourdes. As for Nay, the first place of any size from Pau, it is one of the less known towns of the foothills, but is worth stopping at to see the Maison Carrée, a late Renaissance house; and farther on is Bétharram, a little distance from which is the famous grotto, all made easy for the tourist; part of the journey is done by boat. The sanctuary of Bétharram is a great place of pilgrimage on the feasts of the Madonna. It is said to have been founded by a girl who was saved from drowning by a tree, a "sliver" of which broke not "enviously," but kindly, just in time for her to grasp it and float ashore. This looks, however, like an "etymological" legend, since the name of the place, presumably older than the sanctuary, means "an oar." Some even see (what appears rather obvious) an Arabic origin of the name. The village, at any rate, is very charming, with its bridge drooping with ivy.

Lourdes, with its ancient and modern history, requires two or three long chapters; but as something of all this is known to most travellers, I shall be reasonably brief. The place may be approached in all sorts of moods, and most people will take out of it what they bring into it. In fact,

that is probably the secret of Lourdes, and other "healing-centres," right through. Faith (not necessarily that of Bernadette) will work what in our present state of ignorance we can call "miracles." I have avoided Lourdes at times of pilgrimages, though I have met the big pilgrimage trains; it is best to be there when it is reasonably quiet, with small parochial pilgrimages. But I have studied all I could find on the subject of the cures, and have met at least one well-educated man who declared himself the subject of a cure, and who was, oddly enough, what we might call a free-thinker. The original story of Bernadette will not here detain us; the outstanding fact is that some sort of religious stir was anticipated by the Government's intelligence officers, but even this does not necessarily imply a "set piece," and the removal of Bernadette (on which much stress has been laid) was clearly advisable. The merely physical question of the origin of the water, which can hardly come from the grotto spring, should be capable of easy solution. But the traveller is concerned with Lourdes as it is, and the rest is for the historians. The new Lourdes needs no special description; it is easy to find one's way to the *gave* and grotto; it is not a good place to stay in for the ordinary tourist, as it can quite easily be reached from outside; but those who do will find it a wonderful centre, just because this accessibility works both ways. Argelès is near the mountains, but hemmed in its valley, while many roads lead to Lourdes. The "city" of Lourdes is something quite unique; it is an enclosure in itself, and whether we like the style of its buildings or not (I do not) it makes an impressive and even startling collection. I find the crypts happier places than the churches, and the Church of the Rosary than the basilica. Different places have vied with one another in the giving of gifts: the Bretons appropriately gave a Calvary, Marseilles gave the basilica pulpit,

and so on. It is all worth a very careful and observant visit, and whatever ideas travellers may have formed, they will certainly not be unmoved if they meet a procession of simple country-folk approaching the grotto chanting the Lourdes Litany.

The old town is on the other side of the *gave*, and is dominated by its rock and castle. Thither one turns with relief from the advertisements and petty shops, from the merely curious sightseers, which all spoil any place of celebrity, and—it may be added—from the poor sick people themselves, who should not be encouraged to congregate together in such numbers anywhere. The keep of the castle is not unlike that of Foix. There is only one old tower left on the ramparts. The rock on which it stands is magnificent, as seen from the river.

The Lourdes Castle Museum is very well arranged, and a simple system of numbering enables the visitor to identify the different parts of the castle itself as he passes through. There is a good deal more to be put into the museum some day: in the meanwhile its exhibits form a capital nucleus of Pyrenean "folk-lore," understanding the word in its French sense, which seems to imply everything which illustrates our knowledge of the people and region.

In the Salle des Gardes is a Béarn kitchen. There is little differing from other such exhibition kitchens which can be seen in Southern French museums; what strikes one is the extreme efficiency of primitive appliances, and this in turn seems to suggest that when the days of machinery came in at the door, a good deal of simple adaptability and natural inventiveness vanished by the window. The appliance is now thought out by the manufacturer, and often lacks in the one way as much as it gains in the other. Are our joints now better cooked than in the days of the old turnspits?

THE CHÂTEAU, LOURDES

In this Béarn kitchen are gathered—quite correctly—the household's furniture—cupboards and hutches, dressers, bread-racks (these differ from the Provençal type), as well as some baby-furniture—the walking-stool and a cot. The Salle de Lavedan is especially pastoral; everything that can be needed for the shepherd's life and trade is gathered there, as well as some of the Pyrenean fauna (note the vulture). The various utensils, especially for milk and butter, are nearly all of wood, and show much skill in design and workmanship.

Next to this room is an exhibition of camping and movable equipment necessary for the shepherds or hunters at high summer altitudes. Those who intend mountaineering might pick up useful hints here.

The Bigorre room has, besides regional furniture, the implements of spinning and weaving. Lamps and candlesticks are also collected here. In Room 20, besides varieties of furniture, there are pottery and foot-wear collections. Outside are models of Basque and other houses.

The most useful room, for the serious Pyrenean student, is the "Hall of Honour," where is a capital collection of books available to such students, and relics of ardent "Pyreneists" of the past.

Peasant costumes are always of great interest, sometimes of great beauty. There can be seen here the Ossau costumes of men and women; a feature of the women's is the footless stocking; there are costumes from the Landes and from the Basque districts; and of interest among the Béarn and Barège figures is the marsupial lady, who has made her shawl into a pouch, whence projects the head of an apparently quite secure baby. Shepherds' sheepskins and cloaks are here in variety, and so are different sorts of footwear: the sabots of the valleys, the boots of the foothills, and the great fleecy overshoes of the mountains.

All visitors must owe a great debt to the Touring Club de France for this excellent enterprise. Gratitude can be shown by joining the club.

Of the castle itself the parts of chief interest are, for most tourists, the trough for the boiling oil (we all, somehow, like "something with boiling oil in it"), which added insult to injury by descending just when the attackers were attempting to force the last doorways, in the full flush of anticipated victory. There are excellent views all over the valleys, over the old town, and over the new basilica, churches, and Calvary. In the inexpensive leaflet sold at the ticket office will be found a short history of the castle.

In the museum are exhibits illustrating the story of Bernadette and the development of the pilgrimages, and in the castle chapel are ornaments from the old church of Lourdes, which had to give way before its magnificent successors; and there too are its statues and altars, in prayer before which Bernadette often knelt.

Of much interest are the models of different types of Landes and Pyrenean houses in the upper courtyard. The illustrator was fortunate in finding one of these models in process of erection. One of the houses is a bird's house within, and the castle precincts are a bird sanctuary—a thing only too rare in France.

From Lourdes one can (as I have said) make innumerable excursions; those who like funiculars can climb thereby the Pic du Jer. There are also good grottos, especially the Grottes du Loup and du Roy, which are electrically lit.

Tarbes is, of course, farther from the mountains than Lourdes, but by reason of its accessibility is a centre not to be despised. Its château is a prison; its cathedral is of no great beauty, but of much variety of construction; the town has memories of Froissart, and is now famous as the birthplace of Marshal Foch. It is a very horsy place, as it

contains an important *haras*, and its fortnightly market is celebrated. In the beautiful Jardin Massey, a gift to his native town by a gardener, who came to be chief gardener at Versailles, is the cloister from St. Sever-de-Rustan, but originally made for the church of the Carmelites at Trie.

Near Tarbes is Ossun, with a Roman (or probably Roman) camp and the remains of a once very powerful castle. Thence, through Lourdes, one reaches Argelès, which I take to be the most pleasing place in the Western Pyrenees at which to make a long stay. I spent there an entire April, and never grew tired of Argelès and its surroundings. It was an unusually fine April, with a very early spring, and one really desired one of those delicate machines with which scientists measure the growth of green peas. Not that there are any special "monuments" to see at Argelès itself, but the old town contains the Tour Moncade; and as we are here in the Foch country, it is interesting to see the house where the Foch family lived. The Gave d'Azun, which has been met by the Gave de la Bat, which means valley, at a village with the homely name of Bun, here meets the Gave de Pau. There are walks innumerable, and it is a place in which to take out daily a picnic lunch. There are trout in the rivers (when the worst of the snow has come down) and in the Lac d'Estain. There are very fine peaks: De Viscos, between the Gaves de Cauterets and de Pau, the Cabaliro, further west, and the Pic d'Arrouy between the Gaves d'Azun and de la Bat de Bun. By Aucun and Arrens one can get to Eaux-Bonnes, or as near as one wishes. A short walk is to St. Savin, whose splendid church stands like a fortress over the valley—itself, with the chapter-house, all that is left of a great and important abbey. St. Savin itself was a *vallée* in the political sense, and had a council of *voisins* and *voisines*, having

adopted female suffrage, and, what is more, in an extreme form, for any member could veto proceedings. Many legends cluster about St. Savin. The abbey is said to have been founded by Charlemagne, and this may indeed be so; and Roland is said to have slain two Saracen giants there, which may not. The church is very plain, simple Romanesque, and the apses and perhaps transept go back to the eleventh century. On the holy-water basin is thought to be a representation of the people called formerly *Cagots*, and precedent would demand that I should here go into a dissertation on *Cagots* and propose fanciful etymologies for the name. But as the *Cagots*, whoever and whatever they may have been, seem to have vanished from the earth, I postpone the dissertation till I have found one.

At Pierrefitte both the streams and the trams divide: to Cauterets southward and to Luz south-east. Cauterets is one of the famous watering-places of the Western Pyrenees, in a magnificent situation, and near to some of the very best mountain centres. Here Marguerite de Valois composed part of her *Heptameron*. The "waters" are particularly abundant here, and are apparently efficacious at any time, though the authoress of the *Heptameron* says that they begin to do good from the first of September.

From a little village (part of the "Vallée" of St. Savin) has now grown a great tourist centre, a more western Luchon. Those who feel they ought to go to Cauterets and want an excuse not to, should read the crushing remarks of Taine (a long time ago) and Belloc. But even if "rich vulgarity" has marked down Cauterets, you have the mountains, which soar above human smallness, and the beauty of the setting of Cauterets is quite undeniable. Thence you can get to many of the best spots in the Western Pyrenees. You are almost at the foot of Vignemale.

Let no wayfarer be afraid of becoming what the French

call a "Gavarniste." This does not mean a person who frequents Gavarnie so much as a person who visits it once, and then can talk nothing else—for whom, indeed, Gavarnie is the Pyrenees. This you reach from the Luz valley, tracking almost to its beginnings the Gave de Pau. Luz itself is rightly famed for its fortified church, a type of which the Pyrenees give us several good examples, though not usually complete. The church of Luz is entered either through the tower, or by a smaller door which leads to the main doorway, a good Romanesque doorway; above is Our Lord with the emblems of the four Evangelists. The belfry occupies the space where might be a transept, and there is a gable end at the west. It is all very forbidding and grim. Stones are placed on the slabs above the battlements to keep them down. The church of Sintein must have been very much more effective when its fortifications and towers were all standing, but Luz stands for forbidding and almost defiant strength. Luz itself is most attractive, save for its through traffic, by which all "Gavarnistes" must come. Its sister, St. Sauveur, overlooking the Gavarnie route, on the left bank of the Gave, is a pretty, clean-looking place, prettily situated, but quite denuded of antiquities. Luz possessed some, but except for the church, which resisted any tidying up, they have largely been improved away. Above Luz is the ruined castle of Sainte-Marie, with two keeps. There is also, on a height above Luz, near the modern chapel of Solferino, all that is left of a hermitage, namely a cairn over the remains of the last hermit.

Going on from Luz you come to Pont Napoléon (III), whence for those who like to look over is a wonderful view over the Gave. The Pont de Sia is even higher, and correspondingly terrifying.

At Gèdre, if you have seen Gavarnie, you will be wise,

on a separate expedition, to see the Cirque de Troumouse, which is not so far beneath its neighbour in magnificence. *Cirques*, great and small, are a mark of Pyrenean mountains; apparently they are the result of glaciers and glacial cascades, and the general form is a series of semicircular ledges, on which glaciers repose, the ledges presumably wearing away gradually and increasing the concavity of the Cirque. The Cirque de Troumouse is peculiar in that it does almost equally well back or front; the back (Spanish) Cirque is the Cirque de Barrosa, accessible from Bielsa; it has almost as much snow and ice as Gavarnie, and what is peculiar to Barrosa is its double *cirque*, for within the great wall of the semicircle on which the peaks rest is another beautifully scooped *cirque*, with the stream neatly descending the middle, and radiating defiles coming off with geometrical precision. Another *cirque* on the Spanish side is not far off, up the Cinca valley from Bielsa.

Between Troumouse and Gavarnie is the Cirque d'Estaube; and Capcir is a great *cirque*, farther east, but perhaps the result of different geological formation. The guide-books warn visitors to the lesser-frequented Cirque of Troumouse to take a guide if there is danger of mist; this is wise advice almost anywhere in the defiles; but it is necessary to add that guides in the Pyrenees do not, as in the Alps, grow on every bush, and that it is well to catechize would-be guides before engaging them. It is possible to make the round of the Cirque, in which it is calculated that half the population of the United Kingdom might, with a little elbowing, picnic. But less adventurous visitors will only go as far as the statue of Our Lady of the Snows in the centre.

If you keep on from Gèdre, through the Chaos (a very remarkable example of these stone avalanches), you reach the village of Gavarnie, in the bottle-neck through which

pretty well every Pyrenean traveller must pass. Wise people will always bring their picnic lunch; but the hungry can be fed in a choice of hotels at the village or near the Cirque—since Gavarnie is a remarkable centre, in winter as in summer. Let visitors to the Cirque be shod for very wet going, at most times of the tourist year. Marboré and the lower Serradets are the two great flanking peaks, and on the Marboré side is the great cascade, one of eighteen, and the tallest, by a long way, of its sisters. My own idea is that early April is the time for Gavarnie, when there is plenty of ice and snow, and the cascade itself is partly frozen. Still, others may prefer it running full and in a single leap; in summer it runs in two leaps; whether it is or not the highest cascade in Europe I cannot say, not having measured its Norwegian rivals. But it is near enough and gets superlatives enough for its setting and its indubitable majesty. Since Victor Hugo and Taine, it is no use trying to describe the Cirque in the grand style. Hugo rightly claims that it is something not to be found elsewhere in any mountain range, and he seizes, also rightly, on its real feature, that of the horizontal lines breaking into a series of angles, formed by the peaks, and the perpendiculars of the great wall itself—the wall, black against the ice, snow, and waters. Taine especially marks the cascades, which he describes as a "gauze veil, continually unfolding"; and though Tennyson got into trouble for his similar picture, "slow dropping veils of thinnest lawn" (are the two similes independent?), that is as good a description as one can give.

The Brèche de Roland is one of the passes by which this seemingly impassable barrier can be circumvented, and by a not too difficult path and a not very difficult ascent (the Pic du Taillon), and very fine views reward those who are prepared to go beyond the *col*.

That the Atlas—mountain or giant—of classical antiquity is the Cirque de Gavarnie appears to me most likely. Certainly neither Mount Atlas in North Africa, a shelving mountain, nor even the Peak of Orotava in Tenerife, which does so majestically seem to bear the very heavens on its shoulder, fulfils the description of Mount Atlas as given in Virgil, *Æneid*, iv, lines 245 ff. Mercury sees "the peak and lofty sides of rugged Atlas who upholds the sky on his head —Atlas, whose top, pine-covered, is always shrouded in dark mists, and is lashed with wind and rain; a mantle of snow covers his shoulders; streams run down from his chin, and his beard is frozen stiff with icicles."

There are no pines in Africa, and, indeed, there are no pines on the top of the Cirque itself; but pines in plenty there are both about the Cirque and in the Pyrenees generally. The " peak" is no doubt Marboré; the mists we have all seen (if we have been at Gavarnie at the right time), the rain we have probably felt; the snow mantle, the glaciers, the "beard of the old giant," of strands which are frozen cataracts, these are the great features of the Cirque. Probably the picture which Virgil and others give us is a "conflate" picture, built out of travellers' tales; but no natural phenomenon, so far as I know, so suits Virgil's description as Gavarnie.

From Luz one may cross to Bagnères de Bigorre by the Col du Tourmalet, one of the high lateral passes of the range. Even Mr. Freeston is not ashamed to say that it is steep and wants much care; but it is now on the regular Route des Pyrénées and is constantly traversed by hundreds of tourists. Cars must be provided with wide turning movements, though there are curlier roads than this one; and it is necessary to look out for little channels running across the road.

Barèges, which was in an awkward spot for storms and

avalanches, has been protected. It is correspondingly healthy, and a glance at the map will show how admirable it is for excursions, of which one is to the Pic du Midi de Bagnères (usually styled de Bigorre). Here is the great Observatory, now firmly settled, which passed through troublesome and heroic days in its earlier stages. It is snowed under in winter, and provisioned by porters on ski, with much encouragement, at the top, from the Observatory dog. The peak is a remarkable offshoot of the range, standing up quite solitary at some distance from the peaks of the true range. On the southern side of the road are all sorts of possibilities, lakes, passes, peaks; one of the best round journeys is to the Refuge Packe (named after the English mountaineer and Pyrenean expert) and down by the Col du Soum de Mont-Aigu.

After the Col du Tourmalet the road turns north-east to Ste-Marie-de-Campan, where the two Adours join. At Artigues the tram to Ste-Marie and Bagnères may be taken. Bagnères is an all-the-year-round centre, famous for its marbles; well wooded all round, and fitted with all the resources of a modern spa. It is, however, an ancient settlement, known to the Romans, and by rights its name should have been Ax. Its present name is a haunting one, if only that it makes so admirable an expletive when others fail. In its museum are some very "serious" pictures, a Jordaens, a Murillo, a Salvator Rosa, a Fragonard—really a remarkable collection. It has its older part, round the Place du Vieux-Moulin, itself very picturesque; there are portions of a cloister, and the clock-tower, remnants, the one of a church, the other of a monastery. In the Place is the "Maison de Jeanne d'Albret" (enlarged, alas, in modern times) and another Renaissance house opposite. There are endless forest walks, and the two branching valleys at Campan lead to Barèges on the west and over the Col d'Aspin

to Arreau and Luchon. Bagnères, with its old town and new town, its famous Col du Tourmalet, and its interesting Col d'Aspin, its forests, its streams, its peak, its central position on the range, to say nothing of its accessibility through Tarbes, may rightly claim a pre-eminence among Pyrenean watering-places.

CHAPTER VII

THE CENTRE OF THE RANGE

TO strike the Pyrenees about the centre, the route through Agen and Auch is excellent for motorists, and not really difficult for those who travel as I usually do by public vehicles, hiring cars as I want them. Agen offers nothing remarkable save its plums and cathedral. The original cathedral was destroyed, and its remains have been built into the theatre. The present one is a collegial church of the eleventh century, with fine exterior of apse and apsidal chapels and an imposing choir with transept, stately Romanesque piers with good capitals (showing the Martyrdom of St. Caprais and the Marriage of Tobias) and a Gothic nave, added gradually from the thirteenth century till 1508.[1] An iron cross stands beside the main entrance, and a fine sculptured *cul-de-lampe* or bracket in the north transept. Not far off is the Oppidum (for Agen was originally the capital of the Nitobriges); it is reached by crossing the railway bridge and canal, and then bearing left. Roman and Gaulish remains are to be seen, and the defence-moat or cleft on the north, cut in the rock, is still clear. Another great Roman centre, farther away (some thirty miles), is Mas-d'Agenais; whence comes the Venus which can be seen in the Museum of Agen, in a beautiful old hotel (d'Estrades). The museum is remarkable for the possession of some good Goyas. The Venus (and there are two others)

[1] For full architectural description see Hamilton Jackson, *Rambles in the Pyrenees*, p. 380.

is no doubt a work of high order; I would not, however, make bold to attribute it to the School of Praxiteles, as is usually done, but rather to one of the Asian schools. There are at Agen some good arcades, the ancient chapel of the White Penitents, and some interesting old houses. Lovers of literature will visit the shop of the barber poet, Jasmin (Jacques Boé), an early "Félibre," and should also see the house and fountain of Joseph Scaliger (about a mile away). It is correct to cross the river by the bridge, see the excellent view of the Garonne, and return by the canal bridge to the Promenade du Gravier, where the fairs are held (there is a special one in June). The plums of Agen are a great treat. They are "stuffed," and at first one wonders with what; but the big plums of Agen are like the big fleas of the eighteenth-century wit, and have little plums, which are put (stoned) inside 'em; how far the process can be repeated I did not learn. From Agen motorists should visit Moissac and see its wonderful door and cloister.

The journey to Auch follows the valley of the Gers, and is not without interest; Layrac, Lectoure, and Fleurance all have their picturesque features. But Auch awaits us. Such conscientious travellers as will not go to a place till they can pronounce it may be scared at the appearance of this name. But commonly there are local pronunciations to help one out. With "Rouen" there is nothing for it, for the uninstructed traveller, but to pronounce it (as most indeed do) as if it were an Australian native name, Roowong. As for Auch, I told a porter to register my luggage, and the conversation ran: Myself: Ōsh (to rhyme with gauche). Porter: Osh? (to rhyme with bosh). Myself (to make sure): Oui, Oosh (to rhyme with douche).

Auch is a charming place, with a very good (if rather

expensive) hotel,[1] and lies on a main Pyrenean road. Everyone should go there to see both the striking view from the other side of the river—the west end of the cathedral and the fifteenth-century tower of the Archiepiscopal prisons, called the Tour de César. There are some fine old houses in Auch, and twisting streets; while the curious in such things may rejoice to be at the business centre of the Armagnac industry (rival of Cognac), and near another, Condom. But though much outside Auch is good (there are remains of a great priory, of St. Orens, and of the convent of the Cordeliers), it is eminently a place for a wet day. Not only are umbrellas cheap—I bought a good one for five shillings (stolen, alas, since), and thereby secured good weather for the greater part of this particular journey—but a wet day will cause you to study intensively the finest wood-carving in the world. I say this at a venture; I know the church of Brou, but I did not (when at Auch) remember the woodwork at Amiens well enough to make a comparison; but the Auch choir-stalls are infinitely finer than the quite good stalls of St. Bertrand de Comminges; and these four churches are reckoned as supreme in France in this regard. I do not forget that we have some very admirable English carvings. There is, however, a lavishness about Auch which carries you right off your feet, and along with profusion, the most remarkable finish. The question always arises in such a place, Was there Italian influence? It is an unjust question, in one way. French artists were as good as others; but yet at Auch there is something which suggests Italian influence, and while the work is varied, passing from Gothic to Renaissance (the period was

[1] The "De Commerce," cheaper, is quite good. My own rule is to avoid any hotel with Britannique, Des Anglais, or so on, in its title. Needless to say, I steer very clear of "Majestics" and "Splendids." I have always been happy at hotels "De Commerce."

about the first half of the fifteenth century), and there is said to be at least one signature (over the western door) of a French artist (Bertin de Tholose), there was an Italian Vicar-General of Auch in 1552, and one of the D'Este family had also some hand in the business. Bertin himself is a well-known man, though he seems more contractor than artist. Anyhow, let the knowing wayfarer search for differences of nationality (Mr. Hamilton Jackson thinks there is Flemish work also) and, what is really more interesting, of epoch. Between 1500 and 1550 a great deal happened. Renaissance feeling seems to predominate. The allegorical figures over some of the larger stalls (mixed among Biblical figures) are particularly delightful. People speak of a general design, but though there is constructional unity, there is a great freedom in designs which seems to suggest artists turned loose to follow their imagination. There are even fauns and satyrs among more respectable pagans like the Sibyls, and there is pagan mythology in the misericords.

The windows of the choir are much in harmony with the choir-stalls decoration, and are a very remarkable example of early Renaissance, and certain colour effects are obtained by layers of primary colours. Auch is indeed to be studied. Near the Hôtel de Ville (in the chapel of the former seminary) is a little museum with a Velasquez and some Mignards.[1] There is a library quite worth a visit, even on a fine day; there are manuscripts, incunabula, miniatures.

Condom is a little above forty kilometres away; it has a sixteenth-century cathedral, of a single span, and a fine cloister of the same date. The cathedral is said to have been saved from destruction by purchase. Mirande is

[1] There also is apparently the same *Olifant* (a copy in ivory of Roland's horn) which Mr. Hamilton Jackson reports as stolen from the church of St. Orens.

nearer, and has a remarkable belfry-tower under which the street passes. It lies on the Auch-Tarbes line; but the bolder spirits will travel from Auch to Castelnau by diligence, and hire a car thence to Lannemezan. At present the diligence sleeps the night at Castelnau, which has nothing to attract one except one of the darkest of dark churches, and its proximity (Mouling is nearer) to the famous pilgrimage chapel of Garaison, which can also be reached from Lannemezan. From Aventignan, farther along the line towards Montréjeau, can be reached one of the many grottos which are to be found on and about the foothills, the Grotte de Gargas; hence the usual strange dropping-formations are to be found. There is an upper grotto too.

It has already been suggested that the rather slow route from Paris through Auch, and thence by road or rail to Lannemezan, has great advantages in bringing one almost to the centre of the Pyrenean system. Arreau is in an excellent position for radiating south, east, and west. The approach up the valley is interesting. There are some caves, half fortified, in the hill-side, refuges for the persecuted, no doubt. At La Barthe are baths; and Sarrancolin is a picturesque old place, with remains of fortifications, of a priory, and a surviving church of the thirteenth century, with a remarkable *châsse* of the same date. After some tunnels (which in the *Guide Bleu* are apparently misplaced), one reaches the terminus, Arreau; but a line to St. Lary is being built, which will help tourists to penetrate the mountains at a very striking point. Arreau itself is picturesque, with the meeting of the two Nestes, and with its wooden market-hall. If one continues up the valley, on foot or by diligence, one reaches Vielle-Aure, a good excursion centre, with ascents to the Pic de Lustou or of Batoa; then to Bourisp, where the church is noted for its paintings (end of sixteenth century) of the seven deadly sins, all represented as court

ladies. St. Lary, where I am told one eats very well, is still nearer the head of the valley and its lakes; and from Tramezaygues one can tackle the Port du Plan and ascend the Pic Pétard. Fabian is again an excellent climbing centre, and one can reach thence the Lac d'Orrédon.

The favourite routes from Arreau are those running east and west which form the link between Bagnères-de-Bigorre and Luchon by the Cols d'Aspin and De Peyresourde, now part of the regular Route des Pyrénées. Those who take the high road westward will be rewarded by a fine view from the Col d'Aspin, whose village, Aspin, nestles in the correct Pyrenean way by its *col*, infinitesimal among the great mountains. It is an easy motoring road, but needs care, because you may meet slow traffic round any corner. The road runs through Ste-Marie-de-Campan, which is over 3,000 feet up, and then descends rather steeply to Bagnères. From Ste-Marie there is a tram to Bagnères. Those who travel on foot will have the joy of a yet finer view than from the *col*. You go up to the Hourquette d'Arreau, and rejoin the *col* after keeping along the crest of the mountain.

The eastward route from Arreau takes you to Luchon; there is a steep climb to begin with, but as you get farther up there is more room for the road and the gradients improve, while (according to the well-known rule for motorists) the higher the road, the better it is. You enter Luchon by Allée de Larboust, formerly des Soupirs. From Cazeau-de-Larboust, about seven kilometres from Luchon, runs the road to the Lac d'Oô. On the way is the church of St. Aventin, fine externally, and containing a Romanesque holy-water bowl. Taking it all in all, the valley of the Neste seems likely to become a very favourite Pyrenean valley. At Cadéac, near Arreau, there are baths, with an hotel and chalets.

Montréjeau (one does not pronounce the *t*) on the Tarbes-Toulouse line may seem rather far removed from the mountains, but is a capital centre, has a good hotel (Leclerc: one is well looked after), whence one gets magnificent views; from the promenade one has a wider range, with the Pic du Midi, that odd isolated northern peak, standing up superbly. The town itself has nothing very remarkable save its market-place. From here runs the train for Luchon; but first it is a duty and a pleasure to stop at Labroquère, and cross the Garonne (which seems everywhere) on the way to St. Bertrand de Comminges, a pleasant walk, where it is interesting to observe the vines, trained on pollarded maples. When you reach the village of St. Bertrand you pass on the near side of its modern church (in the little square is a cross upon a fourteenth-century capital) and follow a lane, which may be muddy, to the former cathedral of Comminges. The key will probably appear, if you are seen; and you pass under a Romanesque gateway (from some ancient building) into an immemorial cemetery—for St. Just's goes back to the seventh century and perhaps earlier. The magnificent side-door is of the twelfth century. The colours still show on the statues, which may be St. Bertrand, a woman from whom he cast out an evil spirit, and two clergy. There is fine but simple ironwork on the door. One descends into the church, whose design is regular and primitive; the only real decoration is a wonderful fourteenth-century super-altar, said to enshrine the tomb of St. Just, a boy martyred in the time of Diocletian. The twelfth-century builders used various fragments, some sculptured, of the earlier church, and to see other fragments one must go to the museum at Toulouse (whither one must in any case go to see the prehistoric relics from the many sub-Pyrenean grottos). In the west wall is an inscription which shows that there was some sort

of church here in the fourth century. There was a Roman settlement here, and remains of an amphitheatre and other remains have been unearthed between St. Bertrand and the Garonne. On the way up to the old city one of the most interesting things one meets is (in the Porte Majou) a relief set up to a Roman cab-proprietor with one of his cabs carved thereon.[1]

St. Bertrand's great work was the rebuilding of the devastated city, which now rightly bears his name. Others (another Bertrand and Hugues de Castillon) rebuilt the cathedral. The great door has, on the tympanum, the favourite subject of the Adoration of the Magi, but the inscription which Baron d'Argos wrests into a reference to their gifts clearly has another meaning, and should run thus:—

ET DEO PARIET MIRON ASP(O)RON FILIUM DEI.

And she (the Virgin) shall bear unto God balm unsown.

The last two words are in Greek; the former means a sweet-smelling shrub, and the word "unsown" in Greek is often used of the Incarnation.

The church is a nave without aisles, with an enclosed choir. Specially to be noted are the particularly fine tomb of Hugues de Castillon and the shrine of St. Bertrand himself. By the entrance hangs the skin of a crocodile, which was supposed somehow to have been linked with St. Bertrand. It is probably a crusader's relic.

Of the choir, all that can be said is that it is not as good as that of Auch, but it is very good indeed. Besides the stalls, there is an unusually good organ case and staircase, and there is a little pulpit ("ambo") over the west

[1] A cart follows behind with the luggage, in best country-house style.

ST.-BERTRAND-DE-COMMINGES

door of the choir inside. Then the bishop's seat (or one of them, for there are two) is a specially elaborate feature: it has a canopy, with a figure of St. Michael above it. At the entrance is the Jesse tree, with miniature figures all done with the elaboration of a Praxitelean Venus. There is also a wonderful retable behind the altar (in Sarrancolin marble) continuing the series of wood-carvings, though spoilt by painting. On the outside of the choir is a series of heads of men and women, said to be the courtiers of Francis I's Court, whom he desired to be represented there, as the price of a handsome subscription to the work. Stories of this kind are common; but the heads are quite uncommon, and I call special attention to the fifth head from the west end of the north side, which appears to me the last word in grace and delicacy. The Annunciation also (it can be studied in the picture postcards) is quite unusually good, though the subject seems always to have been the highest possible stimulus to beautiful design and work. Wayfarers, looking at mosaics, windows, carvings, should always look for it; there they will generally find the best work. In the treasury are supposed relics of St. Bertrand, including the "unicorn," a bit of narwhal horn, worked into part of a crozier.

Had one not seen Auch, no words would have been extravagant for St. Bertrand; as it is, it is not easy to overdo superlatives, since the work, if inferior, is only slightly so; and the general design and plan is easier to grasp than at Auch. It was Jean de Mauléon who had this great work put in hand and gave the two tapestries in one of the chapels. Attached is a delightful and irregular twelfth-century cloister, with tombs of canons. One is of a certain Ardengost, who presumably was, in religion, Brother Rosamundus, and the same conventional couplet is on his tomb (1334) as had appeared on that

of Rosamund Clifford at Godstow (Rosamund died about 1176)[1]:—

Hic jacet in tumba (*tumulo* at Godstow) rosa mundi, non rosa munda,
Non redolet, sed olet quod redolere solet.

An unpleasing jingle:—

Here lies the rose of the world, no longer smelling sweet, but of the tomb.[2]

There is much else to be seen at St. Bertrand: two museums; pleasant walks (round the Roman fortifications); and it can be combined (if you get up early) with a visit to the Grottes de Gargas, through Tibiran. If returning to Montréjeau by train, the station of Loures-Barbazan, so far as I can ascertain, is not particularly near either Loures or Barbazan (do not therefore be misled by sign-posts), but at Barousse—all very confusing, especially should you be in a hurry.

The line which takes you to Labroquère takes you also to Luchon, but you will be tempted aside on the way. From Marignac runs a tram to Pont du Roy, through St.-Béat, the road following over the frontier to Viella. Here is the Vallée d'Aran, French by configuration, but belonging to Spain. St.-Béat, from whose marble quarries came Trajan's column, is a sunless little town, and therefore cool in summer, with a Romanesque church and a ruined castle. Great generals grow in the south: Gallieni was of St. Béat. From the Pont du Roy are vehicles for Bosost. Viella is a good centre for climbing and for views over

[1] See A. Clark, *English Register of Godstow Nunnery*, E.E.T.S. The tomb was moved from the church to the Chapter House (compare the story of Agnès Sorel) about 1191.

[2] The gruesome jest is like that about the musician who had recently been "de-composing."

the Monts Maudits. Motorists can go beyond Viella to Artiès, but in any case must go back as they came—the journey is well worth doing twice; and you get two views of the superb Port de Vénasque. Those on foot can do delightful things—and many of them quite easily—the Bonaigo, for instance. The reason why the Vallée d'Aran is as it is, politically and geographically, is that the one range of the mountains ends just west of the Pic de l'Homme (as already explained), and the new, more southerly range, begins with Saburedo, south-west from Esterri. Mr. Belloc recommends foot-travellers to go through Andorra to Seo d'Urgel, thence to Esterri, and so into Luchon and a hot bath, after a six or seven days' tour.

If, however, we hold on to Luchon direct, after Marignac the mountain views become quite magnificent, and the chief joy of Luchon is that one is there right among the mountains, whether for summer-climbing or winter-sporting. Its commanding position (though St.-Béat was always regarded as the "Key to Spain," being on the direct route) made Luchon known from very early days; its tutelary genius was Ilixo. The excellent *intendant* of Auch, M. d'Etigny, is blessed both at Auch and at Luchon. He rediscovered Luchon and made roads to get there. My own view of Luchon is rather that of Mr. Belloc: I like and admire it, but do not want to stay there (one can stay happily near by), and therefore I cannot speak of its many hotels. It retains part of its old town, and the new town is very admirably laid out. It has two rivers, charming avenues, and wonderful views of a magnificent assemblage of high peaks. Funiculars take you up to La Chaumière; thence, in winter, you can descend on luges, skis, or bob-sleighs. Much higher up is Superbagnères, with another funicular, and everything for winter sports at the top. In summer Superbagnères is a capital excursion centre for

those who want to keep to the higher altitudes. The nearer walks need no introductions, they are easy to find; the longer tramps and drives lie up one of the three valleys and lead to three *ports* or *cols*. Up the Lys valley (in the summer there are autocars) the road first follows the Pique and turns abruptly to the right to follow the Lys (the river is apparently anonymous, since Lis, the correct form, means "avalanches"). Cascades reward the wayfarer; beyond the hostelries is the Cascade d'Enfer, and still farther on the Gouffre Infernal (the names run in this gloomy strain), which is the cascade of Gavarnie on a small scale, with a *cirque* coroneted with glaciers, and with a galaxy of peaks against the skyline. A further climb (but a long one) will bring stalwarts to the lakes which gather the glacier waters.

For the Lac d'Oô the road begins with the Allée de Larboust (formerly Des Soupirs) and passes through St. Aventin, already mentioned, and soon reaches the village of Oô; vehicles can go farther, to Asto. Of the lake (about two miles on) and its cascade I have already given some description. Farther on is the "refuge" of Espingo, whence one can reach (by serious mountaineering) several lakes, and the frozen lake of Portillon. Over the Port d'Oô the valley of Asto can be reached, and through it Vénasque. But Vénasque would more naturally be approached by the Port de Vénasque, up the valley of the Pique. This is the Route d'Espagne, from which one can deflect to see the Cascade des Demoiselles, and which leads directly to the Hospice de France, and through the Vallon de l'Homme to the Port de Vénasque, whence one may either make for Vénasque or go through the Port de la Picarde and so back to Luchon. The Hospice is a taking-off place for several serious ascents; you may choose your peak at will: *si montem requiris, circumspice*. It is one of the great points

about Luchon that while it provides amply for the comparatively idle tourist, it also invites, as no other centre in the Pyrenees can, or, indeed, almost persuades one to a break-neck activity. The winter (and equally the summer) excursions from Superbagnères are set out in a brochure to be had at the hotel. In winter, when they must be made on ski, the marks are all set in easily visible places, and these marks are the same as those in the brochure (a most convenient practice). Of the rather longer, one goes south to the Bois de Naon Honts, then turns north to Mi Saluge, through the forest, working along the crest parallel to the Pique valley. Another southern route takes you into the valley of the Lys, as far up as you please to go, and thence into Luchon down the Lys and Pique valleys. For heights, there is the route (a mule-path) to the Col de la Coume de Bourg, and back across the Pic de Céciré; or, with a full day, north from the Coume de Bourg, and thence by the Oô valley to St. Aventin and Luchon. To the Lac d'Espingo, from the Coume de Bourg, is a more adventurous expedition; but it is being made more practicable. A map showing refuges and cabins is most necessary.

St.-Gaudens is a starting-point for Aspet. In itself the town has nothing very striking save its church, which crowns the town effectively. It is an old collegial church of the twelfth century, with central apse and smaller apses: a stiff-looking external wall with small windows. The sacristy, the former chapter-house, is a fine twelfth-century building; generally speaking, it is wise always to penetrate into sacristies, with permission of the sacristan, of course, if he may be found.

From St.-Gaudens one can reach the grotto of Lespagne, but it is not certain that it can be entered. Generally speaking, it may be said of these grottos that they are either open to tourists, easy to move about in, and interest-

ing as curiosities, beautiful in their colourings, quaint in the shapes of their stalactites, and sometimes made more eerie by a subterranean river; or they are semi-private, and should be visited only by the professed archæologist, and him (or her) clothed for the occasion and with a small electric torch and plenty of matches. A sandwich or two and flask are not unwise. The genuine prehistoric grotto was not meant to be easy of access: often they are very awkward and slippery; one may have to wriggle or crawl. It is very difficult to advise what clothes to wear, as it may be very cold and it may be very hot; it may be damp and it may be dry, and it is not easy to know how to be shod. But the mere tourist should not attempt such grottos or caverns as are not usually open to tourists. This whole district of the foothills, especially from St.-Gaudens east, was evidently a great cave-dwelling district. The road to Aspet (there is a railway) is pleasant enough, and Aspet leads one on to the higher valley of the Ger. A road runs from St.-Gaudens to St.-Béat, on which is a motor service.

If one goes east by rail from St.-Gaudens some fine castles can be seen: De Montpezat, of the eleventh century, and De Roquefort, of the twelfth, from which there is a wonderful view.

St.-Girons is not itself a place of great attractions unless the fair is being held, when it is lively and interesting; but no local costumes worth mention are now to be seen. It is all leather shoes and flesh-pink stockings in these days. Nor does one see bears and monkeys now. But in any case St.-Girons would be overshadowed by the strange old city of St.-Lizier. Those approaching St.-Girons from the north can get out at St.-Lizier, or can descend at Prat-et-Bonrepaux and make a pleasant journey on foot thither, by Cazavet. From St.-Girons one can go by either bank of the river; on market-days, the road on the left bank as you leave

ST.-LIZIER

St.-Girons will give you most interest and amusement. This road gives the best approach to St.-Lizier; the river is lined with quaint old buildings, grouped anyhow, among which is a fortified mill with a twelfth-century tower. This line of old buildings is closed by the twelfth-century bridge. The ascent to the upper town is by quaint winding streets, and it does not matter which you take, so long as you keep going up. In the lower town are remains of the Roman wall, but it is the summit of the hill which offers an extremely good example of a Gallo-Roman enclosure and towers, both square and circular. Half-towers on Roman bases flank the long façade of the Bishop's Palace. At the back of the enclosure, now an asylum, is a stretch of Visigothic wall. Naturally enough the site is full of archæological interest. The old or upper cathedral is enclosed among the asylum buildings; it is a fourteenth-century building, and its chapter-house, which is earlier, remains also. There were temples here, and a votive inscription to Bélisama (who is identified with Minerva) has been found, as well as a double-headed Janus, preserved in the cathedral. The clock-tower is of the twelfth century. The inmates of the asylum seemed quiet and peaceable; they were busied with various occupations, and only looked a little curiously at me, as if wondering why I too was not wearing a blue coat.

The lower cathedral is very interesting, outside and in. It is out of the straight, bending round to the right, or south. Its octagonal tower is in the Toulouse style, and is in brick. The apse walls are very thick (some nine feet), with loopholes. There are some very fine capitals, if there is light enough to see them. The key of the cloister is to be found at the Octroi office, higher up the town—if, that is, it has not been taken down in the guardian's pocket to St.-Girons. But somehow one will get into the cloister, a delicate and beautiful one, with elaborate capitals. There

is the tomb of Bishop Auger; and as we hear so much of religious wars it is good to know that here was signed the peace which ended the Albigensian war. Near the church are some old houses and ancient shops. In the sacristy is a crozier which may go back to the eleventh century.

St.-Girons is a capital centre. From here (or from Foix) one can visit the remarkable grotto of Mas d'Azil, through which (always lit up) cars can drive, though it is well to walk it; there are smaller grottos or caves leading off from the main one, where light is needed and care must be taken. There is also an upper grotto. The river flows through the main opening. Montjoie, some five miles from St.-Girons, has a fortification, with towers, and a fortified church within, which has a very unusual tower. Sentein is another small place with a fortified church. A tramway takes you there by way of Castillon; there are Roman remains on the way: the "Pile" of Luzenac stands conspicuously in a field near the road. Both this side and the farther side of Castillon roads branch off to the Alas and Bethmale valleys; here, on a feast-day, after Mass, may be seen some of the local costumes, which daily grow rarer and rarer. On August 15th at Ayet there is a chance of seeing several.

The valley (Bêt Male, "Awkward Valley") is a remote one, at least at present. There is a lake beyond Ayet, and one can reach the Col or Port de la Core and have a good view over the Andorra mountains. Sentein is chiefly known for the remains of the fortified enclosure which surrounds its church; the church itself is noted for its fine belfry, in the "Tolosan" style. At Sentein, being a little in advance of the season, I found hotels closed, but I had a remarkable lunch cooked by an old dame who had been in charge of a hotel kitchen at Biarritz. It was remarkable both for excellence and the topsy-turvydom of its arrangement;

things came, apparently, as they were caught: the trout in the middle of the grill, and a second grill at the cheese stage. I dug my own wine from the cellar at the old lady's request, and happened to light on something unusually good. From Sentein, which has a thermal establishment, one can reach many interesting places: the Val d'Aran, for instance. On the eastward side of St.-Girons lies Massat, where just possibly you may see some country costumes on feast-days; from Massat the road runs to Ax-les-Thermes; southward lie Oust and Seix; from Oust a new railway is to run through Salau to Lérida, and a tramway runs from Oust to Aulus, another of the many good excursion centres, for those who go afoot, including the journey into Spain (Tabescan and onward) by the Port de Guilou, available, however, only in summer. When the Salau–Sort–Lérida line is opened, the route through Toulouse and St.-Girons will open up a very fine part of the mountains.

CHAPTER VIII

EASTWARD FROM FOIX

AT Foix we are already in the eastern section of the mountains, though not yet in the department of Pyrénées-Orientales. The rivers are running now not northward, but north-west, and east by north; the peaks, if not grouped as superbly as in the Maladetta, are individually lofty. About Carlitte, one of the loftiest, is a series of lakes, unlike other Pyrenean lakes; and though the range on the French side runs southward so as to open up the Plain of Roussillon, and contracts itself on the Spanish side to form the basin of Ampurdan, yet the narrowed range is determined to end well, and Canigou takes up Carlitte, while the Albères keep the continuity of the chain till it fronts the sea in Cap Béar and Cap de Créus. There are, indeed, accessible from Foix two or three southward valleys: through Vicdessos there is a track to the Port de Bouet, through Siguier to the Port de Siguier, and from Les Cabanes to the Col of Fontargente. But these roads are not for everyone. There is a train from Foix to Ax-les-Thermes by Tarascon, and from Tarascon a tram runs through Vicdessos to Auzat, a small industrial centre. From Vicdessos one may go westward to Aulus, and so pass by the valley of the Garbet into the valley of the Salat. When one adds the other Vicdessos excursions and those from Ax, which in turn is easily accessible from Foix, it will be seen that Foix is one of the best general excursion centres on the foothills.

Foix itself provides one of the finest views in all the Pyrenees, the three towers and the walls of its castle pitched on a splendid isolated crag with the Ariège and the Arget meeting below. It has also a very good church, and some excellent old houses, rather difficult to get a good view of, because of the narrowness of the older streets. The history of the city, of which something will presently be said, centres naturally enough round its castle and its Counts. At the foot of the castle is the Palais de Justice, formerly the abode of the Governors of the Comté, and containing the museum. At the right time of year and in the early part of the day the view from the bridge up the Ariège valley is almost to be compared with Innsbruck.

When the Ax–Puycerda–Barcelona line is opened, Foix will be on a great railway route, as it is already on an important road route, through Ripoll (which is pronounced Ripo-ye) to Manresa in the south-west and to Gerona in the south-east.

The castle dates from very early times, as there was certainly a Roman settlement there; the Roman coins to be seen in the museum will prove this. But of a castle in the mediæval sense the first trace is in the early eleventh century, when the castle was left by Roger le Vieux to Bernard-Roger, the first official Count of Foix. The position of Foix made it a natural stronghold and rallying-point for the Pyreneans of this side; and thus was involved in wars of south against north, and as a rule of feudal conservatism against innovation. It was a Count of Foix who took up the cause of the Albigensians, and though able to throw off the violent attacks of Simon de Montfort, was obliged to submit later both to Pope and King. Count Roger-Bernard in 1272 tired of vassaldom, and was besieged by the King, and sent as prisoner to Carcassonne, where he wrote troubadour poetry. The castle, therefore, though

not stormed outright, was unable to resist the full force of the north, and later on was given up as the regular residence of the Counts, who dwelt now in weaker and less inaccessible castles.

The chief military genius of the Counts of Foix was Gaston de Foix, the victor of the Spaniards at Ravenna, dying on the field at the age of twenty-four in 1512; but a special glamour somehow rests on the eminently unsatisfactory Gaston Phœbus, Count in the first half of the fourteenth century. He did not lack writers to praise him. Froissart was at his Court, and it was indeed a centre of literary enlightenment; but Gaston himself, with personal beauty and genuine love of culture, united (in that strange but not altogether rare mediæval medley) dark passions and cruel brutality, of which the slaughter of his son, even if it were not murder, at Orthez, and the deliberate assassination of the Keeper of the Castle of Lourdes, loyal to his English sovereign, were the outcome. The splendour of his Court was partly the result of a great ransom he exacted from the Count of Armagnac and other lords whom he captured at Lannac. Phœbus, all in all, is an interesting, brilliant, but most undesirable character.

The castle itself is most striking, not only because of its position, but also by reason of the variety of its three towers, and the wonderful changes in their grouping which every change of angle gives you. Possibly the best view is that which shows the barbican, and which brings the larger square and the round towers into close neighbourhood,

The history of these three towers makes a sort of epitome of the history of Foix, and that, in turn, of the history of the Ariège. Foix, as we have already seen, goes back to Roman times. Some would take its date to Greek times, supposing that Foix is the "Phocian" city, a colony from

Marseille. At any rate Foix had a church in A.D. 498, when the relics of St. Volusien were placed there and the church renamed in the saint's honour. The presence of Charlemagne is generally postulated in the Ariège, as elsewhere; but the evidence of certain proper names which has been adduced here, in the Cerdagne, and in the Roussillon, must be discounted. Words beginning with Car—or even Carol—are probably Celtic; *quer*, as seen in Querigut and other names, means a hill, and appears as *Car* in Car-little, Carol, and so on. After all, even Charlemagne could not be everywhere. In any case, the Saracen element was not strong in these parts. Charlemagne made a kingdom in the south, but it came to an end, and the reign of the Counts began; and so we reach the point where the County of Foix began with Bernard-Roger. The castle which Bernard-Roger inherited possessed some ancient towers, since the square tower (the smallest), which is probably of Bernard-Roger's century, the eleventh, as well as the middle tower, also square, and also of the eleventh century, rests on yet older foundations. The machicolation was added later; it is of thirteenth-century origin. Before that date wooden shelters were erected, which answered nearly the same purpose. One can see restored examples at Carcassonne. But fiery arrows might set these on fire, and so in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it became the custom to make a stone border at the tops of the towers which answered the purpose of the former hoardings. The round tower was built probably late in the fourteenth century. A study of it will show the development that had taken place since its sisters were built; it is a much more modern and finished building. The towers were united by galleries and by other buildings which formed part of the defence. Nothing more impregnable than the Castle of Foix can be imagined; but one day it all became as feeble as a card-house: the art of

laying a train and firing a mine was discovered; even the solid rock could be made to quaver. Feudalism came to an end, and the castles of the future were spacious and pleasant residences, no longer mere eagles' eyries. It need hardly be said that the castle has been a good deal restored, and thus it is that we can see it practically as it was in its best days. But one enters now from the north, not the south-west, as before.

The church of St. Volusien is still uncompleted, and no doubt will remain so. Its outside is only remarkable for its door; its apse can only be seen clearly from the other side of the river. Within it is dignified and spacious, one single span; it has some early Renaissance choir-stalls, said to be from St. Sernin, Toulouse.

My chief recollection of St. Volusien's will always be of an attempt to get peace and quiet there on a Good Friday morning. Not only were they (rather prematurely) removing their big "station" set up in one of the chapels, and erecting, with much hammering, something new for Easter, but the marketers (on Good Friday is a great market for buying the Easter provisions, young goslings to fatten, and hams) all left their baskets of goslings in the porch, beneath the wheeled bier, and their chattering grew noisier and noisier. No doubt, when one got used to it, the mixed sounds of axes, hammers, trolleys, and goslings might appear quite devotional.

Just near the church is a very fine house, with a good doorway. There are other old houses and good doorways in Foix, and there is a metal fountain of very original design, known as the Goose Fountain; but this goose, at least, is a swan. In the library, besides a useful collection of books of local and Pyrenean interest, are illuminated antiphonaries from the old cathedral of Mirepoix.

Foix is a good centre for the grotto of Herm, about nine

THE CHÂTEAU, FOIX

kilometres off, but there is a longish walk up the hill to reach it. Various finds from this grotto are in the Foix Museum. The grotto is noted for the variety of animal remains found there. Ropes are necessary for some of the ascents and descents, but the greater part of the grotto is accessible.

The grotto of Labouiche, beyond Vernajoul, and near La Grange, is noted for its subterranean river, which runs through a natural tunnel (Aygue-Perdent, or Lost River), and emerges some distance below at Aygue-Neychent (Eaux-Naissantes), to form the river of Vernajoul. The river can be followed downstream, but upstream a boat is necessary for those prepared to explore it. But the best grotto is the grotto of Portel; this is private property, and is certainly not a tourist's grotto. For the archæologist it is of fascinating interest, and is worth the considerable amount of scrambling necessary to explore it.

This Upper Portel cave is described in Chapter VI of a book devoted to the Pyrenean and Ariège caves, *Primitive Hearths in the Pyrenees*, by Ruth Sawtell.[1] A representation is given of one of the horses, or rather mountain ponies. The engraved bison is not reproduced.

The human grotesque, in red, who has horns and a tail, is compared to a figure called by the authoress "The Sorcerer," in the cave known as the Trois Frères, represented opposite page 156 of the work. This "Sorcerer" has not only horns but antlers, a horse's tail, human hind-legs, short forearms with human hands; the ears are of a deer; and the face, turned full towards the visitor, is bearded. Horns and tail, then, began early, since these two caves are Magdalenian. The well-known Lombrive cave is also discussed (Chapter IX), and it is shown that the supposed remains of the Albigensians, who according to legend

[1] Appleton, New York and London, 1927.

starved to death there, were relics of Neolithic burials, such as are found elsewhere.

The book should be studied by serious cave-explorers. But it may be well to give the tourist some idea, based upon Miss Sawtell's account, of the different periods of the caves, or rather the cave-dwellers, with the French names, rather wisely (from the French standpoint) taken from actual explorations, of which, however, the ordinary wayfarer may have little knowledge.

We begin with the Quaternary Age, when Man first appears, though some hold that his tools are to be found in Tertiary layers (the so-called Eoliths). (An account of these "Eoliths" found in England can be found in Moir's *Primitive Man in East Anglia*.) Man is thought to have appeared first during a period of warm European climate; he lived in the valleys, and in the valleys we find early flint tools. The Chellean epoch is so called from Chelles on the Marne. The next epoch is named from St. Acheul on the Somme. The only human remain of either period is the Heidelberg jaw-bone fossil; our own Piltdown skull comes not so long afterwards.

It was the Neanderthal type, or race, which first took to caves, under stress of climate and weather. This period is named from Le Moustier, a rock-dwelling on the Dordogne. These Mousterians were carnivorous, and the animals of their epoch were woolly, as indeed they needed to be; and woolly are the animals of our cave-pictures—hairy mammoths, bisons, horses, oxen, ponies. At the next change of climate (still cold, but dry) a new race or type became predominant, and this has its name from Aurignac. The Aurignacian worked in bone and ivory, and having evolved a simple graving tool and discovered various pigments, he became an artist, and has left us a large number of picture galleries, and even some simple reliefs. The mark of the

Aurignacian artist is that he represented animals as he saw them, in motion, not to say in furious onrush. This may be because, as a hunter, he saw them so most frequently, or because he pictured them as he desired to strike them down, as indeed he managed to do; his hearths and kitchens remain as witnesses.

The next period is named from Solutré, a cave shelter not far from Mâcon; this was an industrial period, and much work was done in horn and bone. Then (in a cooling climate) came the Magdalenian (from La Madeleine in Dordogne), the last of the Palæolithics, who brought tool-manufacture to a high finish and variety. He too drew, or carved, or incised, pictures, and it is his work that we see in the Pyrenean and Ariège caves. Art, as Hope, seems to spring eternal in the human breast.

The Azilians, whose civilization the Mas d'Azil has preserved for us, form the stage between these latest "Old Stone" peoples and the earliest of the New Stone (Neolithic) Age; but the Azilians, though later than the Magdalenians, were not better workmen. They specialized in painted pebbles (their use is unknown) and bone harpoons.

This summary reminds us that the Pyrenees and the Ariège are not only interesting on the top.

The lower Portel grotto contains the stream of Baulou, which passes through some unknown channel to turn the mill of Couffet. This can only be explored when there has been dry weather for some time.

The Pyrenean grottos are not perhaps as famous as the cave of Altamire near Santander, but they form a capital group for the archæologist. In the grotto of Marsoulas, in the Petites Pyrénées, the technique of which comes midway between that of the Cantabrian grottos and those of

Périgord, are found wall paintings similar to those of Portel. The greater number of Pyrenean grottos are of the Reindeer Age; the grotto of Ussat is Neolithic, ridiculously modern, in fact. Besides these grottos, and ordinary disappearing or subterranean rivers, there are other odd things in the neighbourhood: at Bélesta, for example, is the intermittent spring, which flows and rests with great regularity except in rainy seasons, when it becomes constant; and not far off are various "pot-holes," and many crevices where streams irretrievably disappear.

Not far from Foix is the monastery of Carol (deserted); and there is a fine Romanesque church, with ruins of a tower and of a temple (perhaps of Cybele). In this church Count Bernard-Roger made peace with both King and Pope after his support of the Albigensians.

The most important, however, of the routes from Foix are those to Quillan, on the east, and to Ax-les-Thermes southward. This latter route goes up the Ariège valley, and is quite charming. As you leave Foix you will think yourself in the midst of Megalithic remains: there are many boulders and outcropping stones about, and these have been collected into heaps and lumps, often with a vine issuing from the lump, and scanty cultivation goes on in between.

At St.-Paul-St.-Antoine is a splendid old fortified bridge, with two Gothic arches, in a very picturesque part of the river. From Mercus onward there is a choice of roads: by the Col de Marmare, or along the river valley. At Arnave is the chapel of St. Paul, of great antiquity; it is also a place of pilgrimage. At Axiat is a cruciform Romanesque church. Near Lordat, itself picturesque, and also with a twelfth-century church, is a very fine castle, in one of the most picturesque sites of all the Pyrenees. It has quadruple fortifications, and was so strong that Louis XIII caused

it to be wrecked, and a wreck now it is, but most imposing even in ruin. Those who study these things should note the first and third lines of defence, as examples of Romanesque fortification, and the second line, with a fourteenth-century gate, of Gothic. The Col de Marmare is a junction for Quillan, but a turn to the right brings you to Ax, whence, if you are motoring and are venturesome, you can continue eastward over the Col de Pradel to Axat, a most picturesque route, but (as the Col is 5,000 feet up and the road none too good) even the redoubtable Mr. Freeston was fain to call it dangerous. It is not, however, the only available route between Ax and Axat.

The road from Foix to Ax by the valley of the Ariège touches Tarascon-sur-Ariège, picturesque as seen from below, and picturesque, if rather decayed, within. The view of the houses along the river is pleasing; the tower, which alone remains of the fortress, set on the top of the rock, is imposing, and the old streets, with unexpected arches and odd turnings, are all attractive. There is a good (modern) bridge and a fine belfry tower (standing alone) of St. Michael.

From Tarascon there is a tram to Vicdessos and Auzat; and from Vicdessos certain excursions, already noticed, can be taken. After Tarascon comes Ussat-les-Bains, whose "establishment" is in a pretty park. Near is the Grotto of Lombrive, with huge open galleries and spaces; among bones found there were some of a large number of Albigensians who perished there from hunger.

Ax-les-Thermes is charmingly situated, and is an excellent branching-off centre, whether to Mont Louis, south-east, or southward to Puigcerda, with a choice at L'Hospitalet of working westward to Solden and thence to Andorra-la-Viella. This is saying nothing of the valleys close by, which can be explored at will. Those prepared to climb seriously

can find plenty to do, whether on the peaks of the Cerdagne or elsewhere. Mr. Spender's book, *Through the High Pyrenees*, should be consulted. A good climb, but demanding serious preparation, is to Mont-Louis by the valleys of the Oriège and Upper Têt. In Ax itself is no antique relic save the "Bassin des Ladres," or Lepers' Bathing-place, built at the order of St. Louis for his crusaders, and now used for washing linen. Close by is the ruined "Castle of the Moors."

CHAPTER IX

ANDORRA

THE chief attractions from Ax lie southward, through L'Hospitalet; in summer either local autocars or those of the Route des Pyrénées run to Bourg Madame over the Col de Puymorens. From L'Hospitalet, as well as farther on, one can branch westward for Andorra; but the ordinary route for Soldeu is just short of the Col. From Soldeu a mule-path leads to Andorra-la-Viella. Most people, however, will travel by the Puigcerda autocar to Seo d'Urgel, sleep there, and then go by motor diligence to Andorra-la-Viella. By holding on direct to Bourg-Madame one reaches the Têt valley, and can (unless one first explores the Cerdagne) follow the river down, by road or in an electric train, to Villefranche and Perpignan.

The Seo d'Urgel route, for those who desire to visit the capital, has the advantage of allowing, or indeed enforcing, a short stay in a picturesque Spanish city. It is most important to remember that even where Basques and Catalans sit astride the border, the border is the border, and on the Spanish side you must do as Spain does. This means, in effect, drink wine that comes out of a leather bottle, which sounds very cavalieresque and romantic, but the wine tastes of the goat; you will get your evening meal late; if you arrive unexpectedly, it will be cooked (ultimately) for you or your party, with what Mr. Belloc rightly calls "incredible delays"—there is no fainting sensation to touch that which you get in Spain about nine or half-past

nine; when cooked, the food will have a smack of the rancid about it, for the Spaniard likes his oil so; and (though my own experience of Spanish inns is very satisfactory) you may find things a trifle unclean.

Urgel, or Seo d'Urgel (the See or Bishopric of Urgel) is characteristic enough. Its Romanesque cathedral (La Seu) is fortress-like, as might well be, since Urgel was long a key of Spain: last northward stronghold of the Moors, and first conquest of Charlemagne. It has a fine cloister, or part of cloister, and the interior is rich with all kinds of Spanish richness. The episcopal palace is a stately building, and there are beautiful views from its garden. The city has winding and narrow, what one calls Moorish, streets; there are arcades and houses with iron balconies. Instead of your morning coffee you will get chocolate. You will make no doubt as to your being in Spain.

A picture of Andorran life is given in *Andorra*, by Isabelle Sandy,[1] a novel on rather conventional lines save for its background, which is the patriarchal system of government still practised in Andorra. *Hinc lacrymæ*—hence comes all the trouble; that which to a casual observer appears primitive and pleasant is clearly fruitful in much distress and even injustice. The head of the family appoints his heir—thence jealousies; marriage is necessary before heirship—thence hasty or injudicious marriages; a girl may become heir as much as a boy, by legitimate inheritance; hence such a one, a *pubilla* or proprietress in her own right, is sought in marriage by the young men who wish to get rich quickly—hence further complications. Moreover, there are—if this picture, by a Pyrenean authoress, is correct[2]—only two classes in Andorra, these "heirs" and "heiresses"

[1] Bibliothèque Plon.
[2] See below, p. 124.

and the rest, who are servants, even in the house of their own family.

The writing of an Andorran story is made easy by the various means of swift death in the mountains; there would be no need in Andorran romances to send the seventeen cousins, who stand between the hero and the title, out to sea in a yacht with a drunken skipper. There is the chance of an affray with carabineers on the frontier; even Andorran (which means Poitevin) mules slip, if the precipice is precipitous enough; trees dislodge themselves; cottages catch fire; in reserve are minor avalanches, boulders, that is, started downhill by the villain at the proper moment, or the genuine major avalanches of snow in winter and stones in summer. In fact, *multimodis et mirimodis via panditur Orci.*

The book does certainly give us a good idea of Andorran ways and customs. We see the Viguier (whether of France or of the Bishop of Seo d'Urgel), the bayle, a meeting of the Council, the quite interesting inside of the rather plainly built Council House, and (most interesting to readers of Cicero[1]) the ceremony, coming down from Roman days, of asserting a right to property by scattering a handful of earth over the land.

A book worth reading, but one that will make us feel happier in our chars-à-banc than if we were inhabitants of some cottage amid this glorious array of Andorran mountains. And schoolmasters at least will feel a thrill of satisfaction in learning that schoolmasters in Andorra are the only paid officials. I cannot recollect if it was in an Andorran village or elsewhere where the schoolmaster was paid to instruct a little handful of half a dozen children—all his own.

[1] See his *Pro Murena.*

No one can claim to know the Pyrenees who has not explored the rugged valleys of Andorra. For those whose holiday must be a short one, Andorra and the country immediately around it offer as delightful a ten days or fortnight as any district of the Pyrenees. There is no more attractive district in the whole range, for Andorra possesses a charm all its own. There are valleys which surpass it in beauty, but there are none which exercise the same spell.

The charm of Andorra is due to a variety of causes: its remoteness, its survival as a quasi-independent republic continuing a mediæval form of polity, almost uninfluenced by modern ideas, its physical characteristics, and not least its people.

For many months of the year the majority of the villages are cut off from the outside world. The roads by which the interior may be approached are snowbound, both on the French and the Spanish sides. Bears and wolves make themselves unwelcome visitors, especially in the western mountains, and the life of the people is then as primitive as it was centuries ago.

Andorra occupies a territory of about 180 square miles; most of the territory consists of mountains, and the population is therefore very small. It remains stationary at, roughly, 5,500, which is the maximum the country can support so long as it stays a pastoral and agricultural community. For generations the surplus population has found employment across the border: a number of younger sons go to swell the ranks of the Spanish seminarists. The only industry is the manufacture of tobacco, unless one may describe smuggling as a part-time industry. There are vast deposits of steel ore, which so long as the supply of wood was plentiful were worked, but are now abandoned. Some day, when Catalan industrialism has reached the stage of development at which it will pay to open up this

"backward" country, Andorra will be able to employ not only all its own people but a large number of foreigners. When that day comes Andorra will have lost its charm.

The independence of Andorra dates from the thirteenth century. Andorrans will tell you that their independence was a gift from Charlemagne, and adduce as proof a document preserved in the archives of Seo d'Urgel Cathedral. But, alas, criticism has demonstrated this document to be a forgery. Probably the Andorran valleys possessed the same kind of independence which was to be found in many of the Pyrenean valleys, but the date of the foundation of Andorra as a State is 1278, and the date of the constitution of the General Council, in much the same form in which it exists to-day, followed a few years later. The circumstances which secured to Andorra the status of a quasi-independent republic were a quarrel between the Count of Foix and the Prince Bishop of Urgel for the lordship of the valleys. The quarrel was settled through the mediation of a friend of both parties, but not before Seo d'Urgel had been invested by the Count of Foix. The terms of the settlement, the *acte de paréage*, created the joint suzerainty, French and Spanish, which exists to-day. An annual tribute of a few hundred francs was to be paid to the Count of Foix and a smaller tribute to the Bishop of Seo d'Urgel. In the reign of Henry IV the rights of the Counts of Foix became vested in the French Crown, but the rights of the Bishop of Seo d'Urgel remain unchanged. Both France and Spain appoint a *viguier* or provost, and they appoint two *bayles* —perhaps "baillies" would be the nearest equivalent —who must be Andorrans, and who are the chief administrative officers of the State. The General Council consists of twenty-four members, elected by the six parishes or electoral divisions: Andorra Vieja, or the Old, Canillo, St. Julian de Loria, Massana, Ordino, and Encamps. Each

parish has its council, presided over by a consul or member of the General Council. The Syndic or President of the republic is elected by and from the General Council.

One of the only ways in which the march of democracy has affected the polity of Andorra is that, whereas in old days the suffrage was confined to the richer landowners, now every head of a household votes. The family is the unit of the State.

Andorra has the smallest taxes of any European country: they are so small that no one begrudges them. It has no national debt, and the national exchequer has always a balance in hand. There are no written laws, and civil cases resemble a court presided over by an arbitrator acting with the counsel of the contending parties more than a law court. Criminal cases are dealt with by a court presided over by the President and acting with five assessors. There are very few criminal cases: Andorrans are law-abiding people. There are no police and no frontier guards. There is no military training, but every head of a household can be called to arms when the liberties of the republic are menaced. Despite the sale of absinthe, drunkenness is very rare. The indigent and destitute are provided for by an ancient custom which imposes on the consul of every parish the duty of seeing that every day food is supplied to them. There is no taint of pauperism about this custom. No Andorran, even if he has been away from the country for years—and then returns too old to work or unable to find work—can lose the right to maintenance. Only once in the last fifty years has the Andorran nation been called to arms—that was during the Carlist Rising of the early seventies, when both Carlist and Spanish troops violated the frontier. Prompt action was taken against the troops of either army found on Andorran territory.

The construction of roads into the country—first, under

French pressure, the road from L'Hospitalet to Soldeu; and a few years after, under Spanish pressure, of the road from Seo d'Urgel to Encamps—marks the beginning of a sinister form of encroachment on the liberties of the republic. For the Andorrans did not want either of the roads: they preferred to remain in their isolation. They looked on their isolation as security against any attempts by their suzerains to tamper with their freedom. Should either France or Spain bring pressure to bear on the Council to link up the road from Encamps to Soldeu, it is certain the Andorrans would reject the proposal by an overwhelming vote of the Council. What they value above any material advantage is their national liberty and tradition. They fear that, once the country is opened up to the outside world, they will lose their independence, and suspect that the material advantages which such "opening up" offers will prove illusory. That Andorra can maintain its seclusion and immunity from foreign influences is too much to hope. The last ten years have seen more change than the valleys have known for centuries. The introduction of compulsory elementary education, under which the children are expected to acquire some knowledge of both French and Spanish, must affect the old traditions and ways of life.

Mountain peoples have always been lovers of freedom, and the Andorran has learnt a wisdom amidst his hills which makes him cautious of the "disinterested" proposals of outsiders and tenacious of his national ethos. An instance will suffice to demonstrate this. In 1880 a group of financiers were looking round for a suitable site for a gambling resort free from any governmental restrictions. They settled upon Las Escaldas. They were prepared to buy up the village and develop it into an attractive town: casino, thermal establishments, shops, large hotels, and villas. They were successful in gaining the backing of the then Bishop of

Seo d'Urgel, who threw the whole weight of his influence as suzerain into an organized attempt to induce the General Council to sanction the proposal. The advantages of the scheme were obvious: money would flow into Andorra, there would be employment for all, and the hardship of their existence would be alleviated. But the General Council, although a minority supported the syndicate and the Bishop, turned down the proposal with contempt and rage. The agitation, probably financed by the syndicate, continued unabated. The French Government at last intervened and moved troops to the frontier. The intervention enabled the General Council to smash the agitation, and the scheme was dropped. Andorra had won a great victory and preserved the integrity of its morality and its polity.

Andorra retains the patriarchal conception of the family. The *cap de casa*, head of the house, rules with an authority which is almost absolute. He alone exercises the rights of citizenship, is eligible for the offices of State, is liable to be called on for military service, and is responsible for the good conduct of all the members of the household. He has the power of nominating his successor, who is not necessarily the eldest son. No son or daughter may marry unless he gives his consent.

Marriages are arranged by the heads of the households, but not in an arbitrary or mercenary way. Negotiations are only begun after the young people themselves have shown indications of a mutual liking. The sanctity of family life is a cardinal article in the creed of the Andorran. Divorce is unknown, and sex-irregularity is regarded as disgraceful. A child born out of marriage is not suffered in an Andorran home: it is immediately sent to a foundling hospital over the frontier, and the cost of its maintenance falls on the household. It is incapable of ever possessing

rights in its own country. Women have not an easy time. Their life is one of unremitting hard work, and they age rapidly. The girls are pleasing rather than pretty. Love and romance play but a small part in their existence.

The Andorran is athletic, but he has not the grace of the Basque. He has no national game like pelota. Even the children lack games, except those make-believe games which belong to the children of all ages. The national dances are tame when compared with those of the Basque. One virtue the Andorran shares with the Basque: physical courage. He is altogether a less romantic figure than the Basque: slow of speech, finding his happiness in simple pleasures, a lover of freedom, and cherishing the traditions which he holds to be the guardians of that freedom. Those who have succeeded in penetrating his reserve speak in high terms of him and of his capacity for friendship. There is a sentence in that charming book by Mr. Robert Herring, *The President's Hat*, which puts the matter in a nutshell: "One visits the Basque country because of the Basque, but the Andorran republic because of Andorra."

There is a physical charm about Andorra which is not easy to explain. It fascinates and grips as no other district of the Pyrenees does. Nowhere does one get the same sense of the augustness of Nature, the spirit of the mountains, and the insignificance of man. Once your foot is over the Port d'Embalire, you have the sensation of having left one world behind and of passing into another. And as you descend from the summit and stand on the snow-covered plateau beneath it, and catch sight of the Cirque dels Pessons and the vast panorama of the mountains, the conviction is born in you, which further knowledge will establish, that Andorra is the most wonderful district in the whole Pyrenean range. You will discover little valleys

which enthral by their beauty, hidden pockets in the mountains where you may camp, fish, bathe to your heart's content, and never meet a single soul for days, and climbs that call for the resource and skill of the practised mountaineer.

The difficulties and drawbacks to a holiday in Andorra have been grossly exaggerated. There are many ways by which the country may be entered: some are easy, and others only to be undertaken by walkers who have had previous experience of the hard places in the Pyrenees.

To those who want to see Andorra, but are not capable of much physical exertion, the easiest way is to make Las Escaldas a centre. The route to Las Escaldas is by way of Perpignan and Bourg Madame, where, if you leave Paris at night, you will arrive the following afternoon, and where you break your journey. There are two good hotels: the Salvat and the Buscail. An antiquated horse-cab will take you and your luggage across the frontier, which is half a mile away, to Puigcerda. Autobuses run from Puigcerda to Seo d'Urgel, and the journey occupies about three and a half hours. At Seo d'Urgel a bus awaits you which will deposit you at your hotel in Las Escaldas in another hour. There are two comfortable hotels to choose from: La Pla and the Paulet. The prices at both of them are reasonable, and the cooking excellent, especially at the Paulet. From Las Escaldas you can explore the greater part of Andorra either on foot or by mule, and spend a very pleasant ten days or more. Any of the villages can be visited and the return journey made in a day. Soldeu is the remotest village, but, provided that you make an early start, you can be back in your hotel in time for dinner. The hotel people are obliging and will pack lunch for you. Above Las Escaldas is the lake of Angoulastas, where one can bathe

and spend a lazy afternoon. Las Escaldas is the only place in Andorra where you can get those comforts and amenities which have become second nature to most Englishmen. As a centre for a holiday of the easygoing type it has much to recommend it. If your aim is not to overexert yourself, but to soak in the atmosphere of the valleys, making short walks and spending lazy days on the hill-sides, with occasional excursions to the outlying villages and a long day in Seo d'Urgel, cities most typical of old Spain, you will not regret your choice for a holiday. There are no diversions in Las Escaldas itself. It is no more than a small spa with hotels and a café and a few shops where you may buy tobacco, postcards, and knick-knacks. The baths are sulphurous and good for the treatment of rheumatism and kindred ailments.

But, although you will enjoy your stay and develop a love of Andorra, you will not sense the secret of Andorra's charm. For Andorra reveals its charm only to those who approach it like pilgrims, on foot and welcoming any hardships that its rugged paths and rugged ways may impose on them.

There is for the walker of moderate capacity an approach which presents neither serious obstacles nor danger. You can make it either from L'Hospitalet, in which case you will travel by Toulouse to Ax-les-Thermes, or from Bourg Madame. The advantages of the first route are that by making L'Hospitalet, where is a fairly comfortable hotel, the Soulé, you avoid the long and tiring walk over the Pass of Puymorens. You can, if the day is clear, shorten your journey by following the telegraph-poles from a point about four miles from L'Hospitalet, and enter Andorra by the Port de Soldeu. But you run grave risks by attempting this approach in cloudy or bad weather, and you miss the fine scenery of the road over the Embalire. The disadvan-

tages of starting from L'Hospitalet are that you will spend your first evening in that most depressing village and miss Porté.

Let us presume you will elect to start from Bourg Madame. In this case you will either go by bus to Porté or take the train to the terminus of the railway and walk. If you want to get into Andorra in the shortest time, you can hire a car, and, if the time is late June, and the snow has melted, you may go all the way to Soldeu. The journey is not one to be recommended to the timid. There is a glorious uncertainty when you turn a fork of the road whether there may not be a boulder in the way: small landslides are not infrequent. It is worth while to stay a night at least at Porté. Porté has become famous because the praises of its chief inn have been sung by Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Madame Michette still presides at that hospitable posada, and you will probably want to stay a night under her roof. There is also another inn, nearer the highway, where the fare is good and the people charming. Porté offers good fishing, and a profitable week could be spent there. From Porté you can make the ascent of the Carlitte and see Lake Lanoux. From Porté you can, if you are an experienced walker and know the cautions to be observed in tackling the high passes of the Pyrenees, make the entry into Andorra by the Porteille Blanche d'Andorre. But it is a walk to which the words in the Marriage Service may well be applied: "Not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly . . . but advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." It will take you nine or ten hours to make Las Escaldas, but you will have an ample reward in the wildness and majesty of the scenery through which your way will take you.

But to return to the route which commends itself to those whose endurance is not that of the trained moun-

taineer. From Porté it is about eight or nine miles of stiff walking up the Pass of Puymorens to the bridge over the Ariège which marks the boundary of Andorra. You keep the road all the way. Arrived at the bridge, you find yourself on a plateau dotted over by vast boulders. Immediately in front of you is a *cirque* of mountains, and somewhere in the middle of the *cirque* the Ariège has its source. You have now the choice of either following the road, which winds and winds to make the ascent of the Embalire, or of climbing the side of its grassy and slippery slopes. If you elect to take the latter course, three-quarters of an hour ought to find you at the summit of the pass and before you stretched the main valley of Andorra. If it is early in the season—the first weeks in June—the road will be buried beneath the snow, and your path will be across the snow fields until you come upon a mule-track or the road again discloses itself. Over on your left is one of the most glorious sights in Andorra: the Cirque dels Pessons, a magnificent semicircle of grey mountains. As the track descends you catch sight of hundreds of horses and herds of cattle feeding on the mountain-sides, for these grassy slopes are the national grazing-grounds. There are no signs of human habitation until you reach Bordes de Soldeu, a little hamlet some kilometres away from Soldeu.

Soldeu has not been treated kindly by the writers of guide-books. They urge you on no account to make your first night's halt there, but to press on to Las Escaldas—a good four hours' tramp at the end of a strenuous afternoon. They dismiss the inn as a poor place to be avoided at all costs, even at the cost of what will prove for most people a forced march. It must be admitted that the posada at Soldeu is not alluring when you come on it from the street. Its entrance is through a yard liberally endowed with manure heaps. But once inside the walls and relieved of

your rucksack, which by the time you have reached Soldeu has become a burden, you will not regret your halt. For from the balcony you look out on the valley with its luscious grass, and beneath you is the river rushing by. Your hostess will provide you with an excellent meal, especially if you had the forethought to warn her of your arrival—there is a telegraph office in the village—and you will sleep in a comfortable bed in a spotlessly clean room and not hear the chickens and ducklings and other live stock which occupy the story above you. Soldeu is a mere collection of rude houses, an inn, and a tiny chapel with an earth floor and some weird examples of native art, but it is situated at a lovely point in the valley, and those who hurry by are missing an experience of a typical Andorran posada.

At Soldeu the road ends and you are on a mule-track as old as Christendom. It descends rather precipitously into the valley, and is not easy walking. After a mile or so the valley narrows and becomes entrancingly beautiful. The track at times clings to the mountain-side, and the spray of the waterfalls gently descends on the passer-by. Occasionally a procession of mules carrying merchandise forces you to squeeze against the side of the track, or it is a young woman and child sitting on a donkey led by a peasant who looks like St. Joseph. If you gaze up at the peaks which rise almost sheer above you, you catch a glimpse of a wild goat or an izard. The hill-sides are covered with a scrubby growth and small trees, and the river continues its way. Just before Canillo is the eleventh-century chapel of St. Juan, with a fine Romanesque tower, and most picturesquely placed on a mound beside the track. To see it in the evening glow, standing up in the long valley and shut in by the heights on either side, is to acquire a memory not readily forgotten.

Canillo is about the largest village in the State. Some of its houses give the impression of being almost part of the hill-side. They are, like all the houses in the villages, built to last and not to gratify the eye. They follow the same plan: stables on the ground-floor and the family apartments above, and in every case a balcony. The tillage around the village is very striking. On the hill-side are terraces of land reclaimed by the patient labours of one generation after another. They are dotted here and there, some at a very great height. As the track begins to climb you pass a wayside chapel with a very ancient and beautifully decorated altar. The track continues to ascend until the site of the great annual pilgrimage, in honour of Notre Dame de Meritzell, the patron saint of Andorra, a rocky eminence alongside the track, comes into view. The Andorrans love their feast-days. They are a devout race, and crosses and stone-built shrines are common along the mountain ways. Some of the crosses are of remarkable beauty, but the images in the shrines are as a rule tawdry plaster-casts, unworthy of their setting.

The track makes a steep descent into Encamps. Just before you enter Encamps are the ruins of a hamlet overwhelmed by a terrible landslide. Encamps itself is not interesting. Here the road to Seo d'Urgel starts, and buses ply between Encamps and Seo d'Urgel daily throughout the summer months. Beyond Encamps the valley widens out, and there are vineyards and luscious pastures, peach and olive trees. An hour's walk along a fine road brings you to Las Escaldas, with its thermal establishment, its hotels, and general suggestion of a typical Pyrenean spa. If you are wise you will stay the night there and not press on to the capital, another mile ahead. Andorra Vieja, Andorra the Old, is not happy in its hotel accommodation. It is more like a village than the capital of a State. True, it boasts a

plaza, but it is an odd, curious square, which serves as a municipal sheep-pen at night.

The glory of Andorra the Old is the Casa dels Valls, "House of the Valleys," the seat of government and justice and the repository of the national archives. It is hidden away behind the houses, but it has about it dignity and expresses the character of the Andorran people. It was built in the early part of the sixteenth century. It contains a council chamber, a chapel dedicated to St. Ermengol, a Bishop of Seo d'Urgel, a dining-room and kitchen, a second council chamber now used as a school, dormitories, and a dungeon. The council chamber is a long room furnished with tables and benches. On the walls are pegs on which are hung the grey-green cloaks and three-cornered hats of the twenty-four councillors. In the room is a cupboard which contains the archives of the State. This cupboard is secured by six locks—each parish has a key—and can only be opened when representatives of all the parishes are present. In a corner is the tocsin, the bell which hung in former days in the turret outside and was used to summon the people of the valleys in times of danger. A door leads from the council chamber into the little chapel, the most perfect example of art in Andorra. It is somewhat staggering to find that the garrotte, the instrument by which the death penalty is inflicted, is stored in the chapel. It is a truly terrifying machine, but it has not been used for more than half a century, and one hopes will never be used again. The dining-room and kitchen are worth a visit. The Council meetings are always preceded by a dinner provided at the expense of the State. Councillors are entitled to board and lodging and provender for their mules. The school-room, once a second council chamber, is decorated with a series of good frescoes of Our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, finely executed in the mediæval manner. The church is a

sombre building with no special features. The only other feature in the capital is the general store—the shopping centre of the whole republic, where business of every kind is transacted.[1]

The road to St. Julian de Loria passes by the chapel of St. Coloma, with its curious but impressive tower and an ancient bridge across the Valira. St. Julian was once the capital, and is still a village of importance. Is it not the chief centre of the smuggling trade? Is it not also famous in Andorra for its dancers? It has a pleasing three-cornered plaza, and its houses have character. From St. Julian to the frontier is little over a mile, and five miles farther on is Seo d'Urgel. But as Seo d'Urgel will be the starting-point of your journey back to Bourg Madame, it may be left out of account until you have finished your time in Andorra. From St. Julian you will return to your hotel at Las Escaldas, and in the following days make journeys to both Ordino and Massana. Not to see something of the western mountains is to miss some of the wildest scenery, but one must be prepared to face some hard collar-work, and, if the highest points are to be reached, danger. To those who spend a fortnight on Andorra and are travelling light—and you cannot travel too light—an interesting finish would be to make for home by way of the Peyreguils Pass, down the Aston valley to Cabanes, where you get train for Toulouse. But one has to take into account the fact that to cross the Pyrenees is always many times more difficult from the southern than from the northern side. Still, provided one is cautious, perhaps even to the extent of chartering a guide, the tramp across the Peyreguils Pass, down the valley of the Aston, would be the crowning glory of a holiday in the little republic.

[1] Andorra is just (1928) issuing its own stamps.

CHAPTER X

CERDAGNE, AND ROUND ABOUT QUILLAN

THE district of the Cerdagne is geographically unique in the Pyrenees.[1] It is a valley, but a valley at a good height, since its capital, Puycerda, is 3,600 feet up. Shut in, however, as it is by a great encircling mountain wall, it is a unity in itself, and shelters both French and Spaniards. It has, too, all the ordinary characteristics of a valley—a long level or undulating stretch, with its river, the Sègre, binding it all together. It is all Catalan, and one may say all Spanish; but part is governed by France, and part by Spain, and nobody seems much to mind which. To make things either more confused, or to blend them better all round, in the French Cerdagne is a bit of Spain, the enclosure of Llivia. Its capital, Puycerda, is the best place from which to get a general view of the whole. But it is interesting to wander about its villages, if you know always where to fall back for your inn; it has interesting lakes and good peaks to climb. Its appearance suggests the English country-side of cornfields, meadows, poplars, and so on; but naturally a good deal is wanting to make up our northern landscapes, while a good deal else is present which proclaims the south.

The French Cerdagne is only a small part of the Department of the Eastern Pyrenees. It is still rather isolated,

[1] One cannot mention the French Cerdagne without referring to M. Brousse's complete and enthusiastic study (*Perpignan*, 3rd edition, 1927).

despite its railway up the Têt; it lies not in the lower but in the upper part of the Arrondissement of Prades, whither fewer wayfarers tend; but isolation (as is proved emphatically by Andorra) has itself its charm, and those who venture will be rewarded by a charming and varied stretch of country. There is plain-land, or plateau, there are valleys, there are forests, and there are peaks. Its chief rivers are the Têt and the Sègre, of which the Sègre begins its existence by flowing north-west, in France, and then turns south into Spain, by Puycerda. There are smaller tributaries, and all have good trout in them. Botanists will find interesting flowers, chiefly in the Eyne valley. It is emphatically a summer district, and even in summer (this applies to any part of the higher Pyrenees) it is wise to have plenty of wraps for day or night. Its chief hotel is the great hotel of Font-Romeu, and its chief curiosity, perhaps, the Spanish town (or village, though it is officially a town, and for that reason, it is said, remains Spanish) of Llivia. Its most important thermal centre is Les Escaldas, its most interesting church that of Hix, and one of its best excursion centres Bourg Madame; while Mont-Louis (not always reckoned in the Cerdagne) is both a curiosity, as having once been the highest fortress in France, and a pleasant place of abode in summer. In winter there are sports to be had at Font-Romeu and Mont-Louis. Font-Romeu is a great pilgrimage place, with a large hermitage and a Calvary.

Puycerda (or in Spanish Puigcerda), the capital of the Cerdagne, is a picturesque Spanish town. In the Plaza Mayor the houses are on pillars, forming an arcade. With picturesqueness is an element of the unkempt, even of the dingy; there are cobbled streets. There is a modern town, of course; but the old town, with its dark church (in hot southern countries they are built so—not merely for forti-

fication but for coolness) and the beautiful interior doorway, will hold the wayfarer most. At the Ayuntamiento, or Town Hall, are precious documents going back to very early times. From the terrace, the church-tower, and other viewpoints, is a particularly lovely survey of the Spanish Cerdagne—a lush plain, nestling villages, great mountains, splashes of colour. This unique and almost unpyrenean corner of the Pyrenees is one of the sights of Europe. It has history too: the Cerdagne, as the largest Pyrenean valley, was a great high-road in the old days, and has heard clash of steel.

Bourg Madame, formerly La Guingette, is almost a poor relation beside Puycerda, and when the link-line to Latour de Carol and the Transpyrenean is made, Bourg Madame may sink a little into disfavour. Still, it will always have some reason for existence as the last French town before Puycerda, whence in turn you go on to Ribas and Seo d'Urgel. Near Bourg Madame is Hix, with a striking church. Saillagousse possesses an hotel, and is perhaps the best place whence to visit Llivia, a not very exciting little town, with its hamlets grouped about it. Still, it was once the capital of the Cerdagne, and is posted at the foot of a good-sized hill. It has a fortified church, and there are Roman remains. As for the Cerdagne villages, the best way to visit them is to radiate among them (and they are commonly picturesque and well situated, and often with ancient churches) from one of the regular centres—Bourg Madame, Font-Romeu, or Mont-Louis. Hotels are primitive in the villages, where, however, one can generally lunch well. Mr. Belloc, if I remember right, speaks gratefully of Latour de Carol.

But a word must be said of the peaks and lakes. Porté, near which are the remains of the massive Tour Cerdagne (there are parts of two towers left), is a good taking-off place. It is just south of the Col de Puymorens, beneath

which the Transpyrenean line tunnels. From Ur, on the origin of whose name I will not speculate—a village grouped neatly in its plain—there is a road turning north-west to Escaldes; this, as its name shows, is a place of hot springs, with hotels. Thence the peak, not particularly difficult to climb, can best be approached. The view is, of course, most extensive, when there is a view. On the way the two lakes, Llat and Lanous, will be visited. These can also be approached direct from Porté, up the valley of Fontvive, where is also a lake; and then the Lanous river is tracked upwards, with good cascades on the way. The lake of Lanous is the largest of the Pyrenean lakes; it is renowned for its trout, but so far as I could ascertain the fishing is a commercial business, let to certain fishermen, and the trout are usually netted. There are other smaller lakes of Lanous. It is said that there is some underground outlet of the lake at Urgel, and the fishermen will tell you an illustrative story. From the lake one may reach the peak; or one may pass over the Col de la Grave, and so reach the valley of the Têt. The waters of the Lac de Lanous are used to drive the trains from Ax to Ripoll.

There are other lakes in plenty in the Carlit range. The Little Bouillouse is really a marshy lake, with reeds growing over it, but remarkable for a deep hole with a sort of maelstrom. The Great Bouillouse, at the foot of Puig Péric, was formerly overgrown likewise, but has now been dammed, and is navigable by motor-boats, while a chalet has been built on its banks.

Two lakes, the Étang Pradelle and the Étang d'el Vivé, have the curiosity of two outlets, one into the Têt valley, the other towards the Spanish side, into the Angoustrine. One lake has the obvious name (found often elsewhere) of the Black Lake, and one the not very obvious name of the Dry Lake.

One of the most picturesque lakes (for there is an absence of trees, and other marks of desolation, about many of them) is the Étang Llat, not indeed surrounded by pines, as is the lake of Pradelle, but prettily grouped in an elbow of the mountains, and with signs of human habitation in the fishermen's cabin. It has, moreover, an island, and those who would see it by sunrise and sunset can stay at the "refuge" built by the Touring Club de France. The fishermen will provide trout; other provisions should be brought.

If I do not describe further lakes of the Cerdagne, that is, of the Carlit district, it is only because the traveller will have no difficulty in tracking them down. Nor is the peak of Carlitte the only height to climb, if it seems, perhaps, the most obvious. Certain it is that the Cerdagne is emphatically a place to visit and to roam about before descending the Têt to Perpignan.

From Foix an interesting road leads to Quillan, whence a train runs to Perpignan. The route runs through Lavelanet and Bélesta, neither, perhaps, a very striking place, but there are remains of great castles about them (Roquefixade, Castelsarrasin, near Lavelanet, and, at a greater distance, Carla-de-Roquefort, Montferrier, and Montségur, famous for a stand by the Albigensians), and near Bélesta are various odd natural phenomena, such as the intermittent fountain already described. One crosses the Cols del Teil and De Puivent, with magnificent views, and finally the Col de Portel, with a splendid view nearing Quillan of the gorge of Pierre Lys.

Quillan itself has a castle, of which a solid part remains, and a dark church; on the right side of the porch is a very ancient carving, and round the left side is a picturesque "bit." In the square is a statue of the Abbé Armand, of whom presently.

As a centre, Quillan is excellent. Hence one can visit the Capcir, which is perhaps the bed of an ancient lake, and is reputed to be the coldest pasture-land in France. The groups of Mont-Madres and St. Barthélemy are accessible, as well as that of the Carlitte. There are main roads to Carcassonne and Mont-Louis, to Foix and Perpignan. There are good walks near, and good tramps at a distance, up mountains or through forests. No doubt the finest of these walks or drives is through the well-known glen of Pierre-Lys, where runs a most important French main road, due to the inspiration and energy of the Abbé Armand, curé of the little village of St. Martin-Lys, who cleft the rocks with the zeal of a Hannibal, and himself planned much of the actual engineering, dangling at the end of an uneasy rope. Every writer quotes the lines inscribed on one of the road tunnels—for there are three Trous du Curé—and I must not be behindhand:—

> Arrête, voyageur! Le maitre des humains
> A fait descendre ici la force et la lumière,
> Il a dit au Pasteur: Accomplis mon dessein;—
> Et le Pasteur des monts a brisé la barrière.

While the Abbé opened up a way to his little village, the actual through road was not finished till much later, and the continuation to Mont-Louis not till more than a hundred years after the Abbé's last explosions. Napoleon thought it "a pity the man should be a priest." No wonder motorists are grateful to the Abbé's memory. But not motorists only: a walk along the Abbé's road, and along the Lys defile, by the side of the Aude, gives you one of the best of all the Pyrenean gorges. It will take you to Axat, a pretty place, not yet a hunting-ground of tourists, but, from its position, soon destined to be.

North from Quillan is Carcassonne, and on the way is Alet, where is a ruined abbey. It has an apse of five sides,

into the ruins of which you look; the eastern apse and half dome are still complete. It is seemingly of twelfth-century workmanship. If from Quillan you continue to Mont-Louis, there is another fine gorge to traverse on the Upper Aude, that of St. Georges. The Bains d'Ussou, with fine ruins of the castle not far off; and after the neighbouring Bains de Carcanières the road narrows between a mountain and a high rock, and so enters the Capcir. From Formiguères a road leads to Formiguères-aux-Bouillouses, the Bouillouses being the lakes already described. After the Col de la Quillane, the road continues to Mont-Louis, but a side road goes off through the forest of Font-Romeu.

From Quillan to Perpignan the road (or railway) passes first through Axat, before which one gets views (in the tunnel) of the gorge of Pierre-Lys, and after which one gets better views of the defile of St. Georges to the right. Near La Pradelle are the ruins of the castle of Puilaurens on its eyrie looking over the Boulzane. Pyrenean castle-builders had choice of splendid inaccessible sites: Puilaurens and Lordat are two which vie with Eze on the Riviera. Fenouillet, farther on, has its castle, also a ruin. St. Paul-de-Fenouillet has an old church, fourteenth-century, and the tower of the old chapter-house, with octagonal cupola—its chapel is now a barn; and other buildings have either perished or suffered some like fate. The church-tower has an ironwork crown, and inside are galleries, a little unusual abroad. The town is pleasant enough to stay in, and has the attraction of the somewhat capricious Agly, which makes an unexpected turn, and then forces a course through the gorge of Calamus, where the road follows it, cut into the left bank. Above the road is a famous pilgrimage chapel, the Chapelle de St. Antoine-de-Calamus, or of Priez-sans-cesse.

From St. Paul-de-Fenouillet two roads run, which may

at any time be useful to the wayfarer: one to Prades, and one to La Tour de France, where the devious Agly runs, and where was once a great castle to front the Roussillon castle at Estagel. Through La Tour de France the Têt valley may be reached at Millas.

Yet more castles await our view, Pierrepertuse and Quéribus, both frontier castles; Pierrepertuse, of the twelfth century, with Visigothic foundations; Quéribus, guarding a road no longer of great importance (though, indeed, it leads to Limoux, where the *Blanquette* comes from), with an octagonal keep, still earlier than Pierrepertuse, of which, however, it was an outlying defence. The road from Quillan to Perpignan gives a traveller a remarkable opportunity of studying castles.[1] Estagel, birthplace of Arago the mathematician, was also the home of Pyrenean "Malvoisie" or "Malmsey" (the word was applied to wines, like the original Malvoisie from Madeira). Not much Malvoisie is made now at Estagel, which is a pity, for who that has but the barest knowledge of English history would not feel happier with a butt of Malmsey in the corner of his cellar? At Estagel they have a festival of Arago. I wonder how English schoolboys would enjoy a yearly festival of Euclid?

At Espira-de-l'Agly (Espira is apparently a Celtic word) is a church with a very fine door, rather like that of Corneilla-le-Conflent. And now we are at Rivesaltes, a great centre of wines of Roussillon, chiefly Grenache and Muscat. It has good bridges, a fine Tour de l'Horloge, arches, and a belfry. It is the birthplace of Marshal Joffre, in the street formerly "Des Orangers," now Rue Maréchal Joffre. The inscription on the house is as follows:—

ICI NAQUIT 1852 JOFFRE
CÉSARE MARÉCHAL DE FRANCE

[1] They are discussed, together, below, page 154.

It may be useful to know that while the Hôtel du Parc given in the guides *n'existe plus*, the Hôtel Marty, to the right from the tram terminus, coming from Perpignan, will give you an excellent lunch. This tram, or a train, or a walk, will bring the traveller to Perpignan.

At Rivesaltes I was given with the cheese a sort of dry pancake, which I met frequently later on, but do not remember on former visits. It may only appear round about Easter, but it is very good. There is a convenient train to Perpignan just after lunch; they call it a semi-direct, but it seemed to go as direct as it could. Everybody on entering went to sleep, and this seemed to be quite an understood thing.

CHAPTER XI

THE ROUSSILLON

THE Roussillon has a very great charm for me, and no doubt for many others too. In fact, but for two things, the tramontane and mosquitoes, I should long ago have filed my schedule (whatsoever that is) and fallen back on Perpignan or Collioure, to become a devoted Catalan and son of Roussillon. From or about Perpignan you have everything desirable: mountains and sea, valleys and plains, Parisian cafés and early green peas. But, says the Biarritzian, all these you can get (except, perhaps, the early green peas) at the other end. Yes, with Atlantic gales and Atlantic-borne rainstorms, sometimes dissolving in mists and frets, sometimes in lashing rains. Beautiful valleys, indeed, there are on the west, fine mountains, charming sea places, Bayonne and Hendaye certainly (for as to Biarritz, and great international resorts of this kind, I share Mr. Belloc's violent feelings); but all that will not compensate or make good for the valleys of Têt and Tech, the almost Moroccan beauties of Collioure, the cloister of Elne. Armies moved along the western coast road; Roncesvalles breathes chivalry and paladins; Perpignan takes us to Hannibal and his mixed host, off to do the impossible; to Pompeius' legions piling up for him his "record score" of victories; and there is Canigou. I do not know what you can place at the western end of the Pyrenees to balance Canigou; not one of the highest peaks, but by its isolation, or rather the isolation of its group, the most striking and

imposing of all the Pyrenees peaks, better even than the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, which stands boldly out in the plain, and having a sort of odd spell which everyone who lives within its range must undergo. Canigou is to the inhabitants of Roussillon a sacred mountain; they (literally) do not like your going too near it—save those who make it a business to help you there—and they do not like to speak of it overmuch. This eerie reverence for natural objects lingers elsewhere than in the Roussillon, but it centres very closely about Canigou. It descends from old times, when every tree or rill sheltered its divinity or sprite; when Homer spoke of night as Holy Night; when one spoke rarely, and then cautiously, about natural objects. This incidentally is the cause of the comparative absence of descriptions of nature in the nature-loving poets of Greece and Italy; much foolish talk has been expended on the subject, and superior persons have denied appreciation of natural beauty to the very race who taught us the canons of beauty. No, there was a silence about such things, and no Greek or Roman poet, so far as I know, mentions what we find so interesting, the fire-flies. Just so Canigou is still the sacred mountain; and when I see it after an interval, it gives me that queer feeling down the spine which beautiful music gave Charles Darwin. For the tramontane, it does not blow always, though it blows far too often. This is worse than even a mistral (if that can be), because its force is as great as its bitter frigidity. In walking the coast I have had to cling to the rocks at the side of the road to get round the corner.

It is of the tramontane, or of something uncommonly like it, that Victor Hugo makes the old beggar-man speak in his "Guitare." He has seen pass, day by day, a beautiful girl driving across the bridge; now she has married for money, sold herself *pour un bijou*, and the old man

CANIGOU

has lost his faith in woman. The refrain comes in each verse:—

Le vent qui vient au travers de la montagne
Me rendra fou!

But the last verse has the refrain:—

Le vent qui vient au travers de la montagne
M'a rendu fou!

That is how I feel.

Collioure is the best place in the tramontane. Some kind mediæval engineer built an enormous wall up the cliff, facing due south; there you sit, and pretend there never was a tramontane, and follow the angle of the sun round, and are happy. Despite the tramontane, vines grow, asparagus grows, green peas grow, in the great Roussillon plain, and you may rush from our north-easters in March to find warmth and joy and bountiful abundance of green things in the Roussillon.

Perpignan, if out of the actual range of mountains, which follow from Canigou west by south, and after the pleasing group of the Albères go on to finish up finely at Cap de Créus, nevertheless makes a natural centre for the Roussillon, as well as for the railway leading into Spain, by which you can comfortably visit Gerona, with its wonderful single-span cathedral and its most picturesque streets and buildings.

Perpignan itself was once a smaller Carcassonne, with ramparts all round (which might be useful to-day against the tramontane), but now they have gone, and of fortifications only the Castillet, the gate of Notre Dame, and the Citadel (remade by Vauban) remain. The Castillet of red brick, as were, it seems, the fortifications of which is a remnant, so that Perpignan, in the right light, must

have been, and still in some measure is, "a rose-red city"; and if not "half as old as Time," is old enough to satisfy any ordinary antiquary. What survives must be strong, since it withstood the blasts of the tramontane, as deadly as many kinds of artillery. One thing which was not strong enough was the tower of the cathedral. The present tower is comparatively modern, though it has a sixteenth-cenutry bell. I shall leave description of the chief buildings till later, and also some account of Roussillon history, for which let readers nerve themselves.

The worst point about Perpignan is that its "centre of animation," round the Loge, is rather small and congested. But, to make up, there is plenty of space elsewhere, and there are always the plane-trees. The little seaside place of Canet is delighful when . . . (but I must forget the tramontane). It had its fortifications and castle, now in ruins. It is largely a bungalow town. The sea is real Mediterranean, and can be most blue and alluring. South of Canet is a big lagoon, one of a chain of lagoons which runs up to Narbonne. The coast view is charming southward, looking toward the Albères and the eastward bend of the coast-line. On the way to Canet are the scanty remains, a round tower and some buildings now incorporated in others, of Castel Rossello, or Château Roussillon, all that is left (with the church) of the old capital, Iberian first, then Phœnician, then Gallic. Roman envoys came hurrying down to beg the Gauls in 217 to check Hannibal there; but the Gauls were not inclined to pull Rome's chestnuts out of the fire; they heard Hannibal's legions, elephants and all, "thunder past," and turned again to their daily tasks. But not for long; where Rome had seen, she came and conquered. Ruscino was Roman for half a millennium; then other strangers thundered down, and Ruscino fell to them as did Imperial Rome herself. The

northerners' turn ended too; then it was Saracens and Moors who flocked in conquering hordes; and when they too were pushed back, the castle fell into the hands of mediæval barons, who built the round tower. I will not relate the gruesome story of William de Cabestany (a place not far away), whose troubadour love-making had the most tragic of endings. The story is an old one; but the tomb of William and Saurimonde, the lady of Roussillon, was believed to be in the cathedral of Perpignan, and was frequented yearly by lovers who hoped that their own love might run more smoothly. The verses of William which brought about the trouble survive; they are only a serenade of the usual troubadour kind, though beautiful enough, and all he asks is that he may kiss the lady's glove. But they stand as a dreadful warning against all poetic licence. Hannibal's road, maybe, is yet to be trodden, and happily it is now too poor and deserted to submit to noisy motor traffic. Let it abide so. Elephants may have been ponderous, but they had a dignity which electric trams and hooting cars have not yet acquired. The old castle stands now in a great stretch of vines, ploughed (as is the Roussillon way) by horses, and every now and then there is a dip, and there, protected from winds, grow early asparagus and green peas and other kindly fruits of the earth.

Perpignan (to which we must return from this great and romantic old remnant of a great city) has good hotels, cafés of high repute, and a noted restaurant, in the Rue-des-Cardeurs. I advise anyone who stays at Perpignan with the intention of making excursions to stay in one of the humbler hotels near the station. The journey to the station is tedious and uninteresting; there are trams in plenty, but they have an odd way of just not being there when you want them, while, for returning, the trains empty a considerable crowd which swamps the standing trams, and there

you are, or there you are not, again. There are two stations, but both equally far from the Castillet: the smaller one takes you to Barcarès, a fishing village and port, with a good beach, where you will wish to go; and to Thuir, a little industrial town, to which you may not wish to go, unless to see how a much advertised tonic is prepared; there are, however, antiquities there also.

The history of Perpignan is bound up with the history of Roussillon. I need hardly say that I owe much in what follows to the *History of Roussillon* by J. Calmette and P. Vidal, both excellent authorities.

After Ruscino, Elne was and remained the chief city. Collioure and Llivia were Roman strongholds, and continued for some time to be strongholds, under the Visigoth occupation, whence possibly the name Gotolania, which somehow became Catalonia (the change is not so simple as it might appear). By the beginning of the eighth century Roussillon was absorbed into the Arab empire, about which we are very much in the dark. In the Carolingian age feudal Roussillon began, and in 865 it was definitely attached to the south, and not, as in Roman times, to the north; in other words, Catalonia became possible. Nay, Catalonia began, for there soon arose a local chafing against imperial, that is northern, rule, and a local patriot arose with a prophetic name, Joffre (Wilfredvs or Gavfredus) le Poilu, and won for his countrymen a prophetic victory. Into the developments of feudalism I will not go. There is a clear account in F. Miltoun's *Castles of Old Navarre*, but the history is more complex than he suspects. Possibly we may see a double development, in both directions due to a desire of security of tenure; the Church Corporations accumulated land by grants and gifts, and owners grouped their small holdings under some powerful baron for protection. Over all the Crown kept a hand. Even Joffre the

Hairy, actual master of the country, owed allegiance to Charles the Bald. Various legends of etymological origin recount the origin of Perpignan. That is best which takes it back to the gens Perpinia, one of whom may have had a villa there. The villa, however, grew into a *ville*, and in 1010 the church of St. John Baptist was consecrated; later, the chapel of Our Lady of the Ravine was incorporated. It was a Joffre, Count of Cerdagne, who founded St. Martin-de-Canigou, where he had lived some time and died. His grandson founded Villefranche; but the next Count left no children, and his country fell to the Count of Barcelona, who was King of Aragon. A prosperous time followed, especially under James the Conqueror, from whom the country passed to his younger son, James the Second, King of Majorca. Perpignan became the capital, and the royal palace still survives in fragments of the Citadel. The palace was a fortified castle, with eight square towers. Of the upper chapel the door remains. This was a great time for Perpignan. There grew up commerce; imports, local industries (textile in chief); there is a busy community, and a bell rings at night called the "Burglar's Bell," to warn wise citizens to lock up.

Trouble, however, arose between Jacques and his brother, King of Aragon. France lent its weight to James; but the French troops were stricken with typhus, and Philip the Bold died if not in, at least near to, Perpignan. No sort of relationships seemed to bind together the Princes of Aragon and Majorca. When in the latter half of the fourteenth century they were cousins in blood and brothers-in-law, they could not abide one another. Aragon won, and Peter the Ceremonious made a (no doubt) very ceremonious entry into Perpignan, and the second reign of Aragon began. Under this second reign sprang up the Castillet, with other fortifications: the Gate of Vernet (now the Gate of Our

Lady of the Bridge). The Castillet was then also a gate; it was completed a century later. Perpignan had a university, and received the Consulship of the Sea. Under Queen Marie it became exceedingly prosperous. It was Louis XI, the villain of so many pieces, who pushed his frontier to the Pyrenees by the Treaty of Bayonne, a treaty which appeared to make an alliance, but in truth made a domination. Armed force was necessary in Roussillon: the spirit of the Hairy Joffre was not dead. But though Roussillon (with the Cerdagne) made good its revolt, it was out of the frying-pan of Bayonne into the fire of Franco-Aragon politics. Roussillon and the Cerdagne were, in effect, what the Cerdagne now is, divided between France and Spain. The ins and outs of Louis's policy require a Scott to follow and describe them. Suffice it that the Roussillon abhorred Louis and all his works, and—what is much to their credit—seem to have seen through his tortuous device. It is during the Louis XI period that the Bianca legend arose (travellers will have seen the inscription on the house); dates do not fit (they rarely do with legends), but the story shows the spirit of the times. Rightly did Aragon grant the city the proud title of Fidelissima.

I will not follow the story of Perpignan, now emerging from the glamour of the mediæval into the comparative dreariness of the seventeenth century, save to recount the curious war between Perpignan and Villefranche, which had stolen certain relics, and apparently "spiled" (I quote Sam Weller) the Perpignan beadle. Perpignan then recollected that it had an ancient right to declare war when annoyed. So behold

> **Perpignan s'en-va-t-en guerre,**
> **Miroton miroton mirotin!**

It shot from a small cannon, and skirmishers trod on the

enemy's vines, and this brought out the white flag. The beadle and relics were restored. Fired by this victory, Perpignan in 1629 "took on" Barcelona; but it was a Tweedledum and Tweedledee affair, and the Perpignan host only got as far as Elne.

These chivalric splendours preceded a sorrowful time of pestilence, which not even the tramontane could blow away.

Catalonia had once before been between the devil of Louis XI and the deep sea of Aragon; now she was to be between the devils of Louis XIII and Richelieu and the deep sea of Philip IV and Olivares, both made familiar to us by Velasquez.

A terrible siege followed. Collioure gave itself up in April 1642; Salses and Perpignan held out, with indescribable sufferings. In September the town had to surrender; with that curious topsy-turveydom of a frontier fortress, it was defended by Spaniards, who looked on the citizens as their enemies, and attacked by French, who, victorious, came as deliverers. Perpignan was now capital of Roussillon, retaining curious traces of old independence. An attempt of the Spaniard to recover the town brought in Vauban. With French fortifications came in the French language.

The Revolution swept over Catalonia as over all the rest of France. The Spaniards seized the moment to invade; Cassanyes rallied the citizens, and the victory of Peyrestortes, followed by later victories, saved Roussillon for France.

Here the history of Perpignan does not indeed end, but here we leave it. The remainder, to our own time, was not free from troubles; but Perpignan, much tried, has emerged, shorn indeed of much that we should like to have been retained, to live a new expanding life in less troubled days.

CHAPTER XII

ANTIQUITIES AND CASTLES IN THE ROUSSILLON[1]

MAN settled early in the Roussillon, and happy were those who dwelt in caverns and holes in the rocks, in which they could lie snug during the tramontane. Such caverns are to be found in the valleys of Têt and Tech. The most convenient grottos for the tourist to reach are those of St. Paul-de-Fenouillet.

Large stones, which seem to be dolmens—but not all are—can be found in good numbers. It is the Tech valley, again, where they can best be seen; there are some in the Têt valley also, and near St. Paul-de-Fenouillet.

After the primitive folk of the dolmens came ages of great unsettlement, though the Ligurians developed sea ports and sea traffic, and may be said to have founded certain Roussillon cities. On the road over the Pass of Perthus were settlements of a humbler order, probably Iberian; these Iberians, being pastoral and agricultural, did not, apparently, conflict with the Ligurians near the coast. It is in Ruscino, where now are the remains of Castel Rossello, that we can best study the traces of these different populations. It is thought that definite traces of the Iberian township have been found there. Primitive workshops are to be found, and there is an Iberian cemetery.

[1] There are good books on ancient Roussillon, especially those of Pierre Vidal. But I have found useful also a scholarly résumé by Raymond Lautier in *Revue des Études Anciennes*, vol. xxi.

Roman remains are not common in the Roussillon, though the Romans were there long enough, and though they built right through it their great Domitian Way. It is Ruscino, once more, which becomes prominent, as indeed its position dictated. Excavations there have revealed the traces of the market-place; they are on the south end of the little tableland, and the Romans' views on the tramontane can be gauged by the relics of a stout wall on the north and west sides.

There was a house close by which might seem to be a lodging-place for the merchants; it has many small rooms and narrow passages. The market-place had no arcades, but pillars divided off the space into a sort of nave and aisles. Only minute fragments of statues and some official inscriptions help us to reconstitute the history of the Roman colony, which seems to have come to a sudden end, though we do not know exactly when.

The Romans very wisely gave their chief attention to the guarding of their great road and the passes. Llivia, right up in the mountains, was fortified; Collioure by the sea; but it was at the pass of Perthus that the strongest forts were placed, where the gorge of the Écluse permitted strong barriers to be laid across the road. Part of the Château des Maures is possibly Roman; the towers are of the square Roman type, and there are other Roman remains near by. Here, perhaps (and we can only say "perhaps"), were the "Trophies of Pompeius."

Meanwhile the coast road through Cerbère was apparently used as a reserve; certainly it was not as strongly guarded. The more inland passes were the danger-spots. An enemy can, after all, always be pushed into the sea, and the sea itself was a useful means of moving troops quickly from point to point. The great road, running north, passed under the Forum of Castel Rossello, and then made for Salses.

Where stone was handy, little settlements were built, and the expert archæologists can trace other buildings, many of brick, on either side of the great road; while certain place-names, by their Roman ring, suggest estates or small settlements. There are Roman bath remains at Amélie, and other ruins near Céret.

This is, indeed, a scanty enough list of Roman traces in the Roussillon. But the Romans seem to have been too busy, hurrying hither and thither along their great road, to do much serious building; they may well have disliked the tramontane, and they seem, anyhow, to have melted away from the Roussillon rather earlier than from other parts of their unwieldly empire when its fall began to threaten.

The Castles of the Northern Marches

The Roussillon has always been, till the final settlement between France and Spain, a debatable ground, and the plain-land by the coast has always been a great prize as giving an easy passage to a moving army. The tendency was for the southern power, Spain, not to rest satisfied with her natural borders, that is, the Pyrenean ridges which run boldly down into the sea at Cap Béar, but to push out towards the northern mountains (the Corbières) a line of strong forts, to be met by a French line as near as might be, so far, that is, as natural positions allowed. Thus we find the Spanish stronghold of Força Real, north-east of Belesta, watched by the French strongholds of Couchons and La Tour de France, upon what then was the French frontier.

The eastern plain was most difficult to defend, but thanks to the Étang de Salses it was possible by a strong fort at Salses itself, on the ground of the old Roman fort, and by Opoul and Castel Vell and Périllos, westward along

the spurs of the Corbières, to make it very risky for any force to pass along; while Perpignan and Castel Rossello (also on Roman foundations) guarded the sea itself, and would help to head any passing army into the more dangerous valleys which run east and west; and even on the slopes, or on the plain itself, to the westward of the ordinary route, there were forts ready to catch the unwary: Mas Déous (used as a French fortress in the last Spanish war) and Castelnou, now finely renovated by an American owner.

This bit of military geography will lend meaning to the castles of the Northern Marches. The wayfarer will wonder —or should wonder—at first, to find a line of strong castles along the valley of the Verdouble, north of the Agly valley; but they are there just because the southern heights of this valley were the most northerly line (save for Périllos and Opoul, boldly thrown out on isolated heights) which was reasonably defensive.

It is good to wander among those old outposts. There are few parts of Europe where the castle system reveals itself more clearly; moreover, some of the castles are still magnificent in ruin.

Only the wayfarer must be prepared for long journeys and some hard walking, and must plan his routes by inquiries made on the spot.

Most remarkable, no doubt, among these northern Roussillon castles is Queribus, the "Rock" Castle, as its name denotes, guarding a by-pass over the Corbières (the Maury Pass), and itself an outpost of the Château de Pierrepertuse.

You reach Queribus—if you are going to reach it—from Cucugnan. The books call it eleventh-century work, but it may be older, at least in origin. Its inaccessible side overlooks the Agly valley, which it dominates at a great

height, about 2,000 feet above sea-level. It is so built upon a great splinter of rock that it appears to be a mere continuation of the rock itself, and forms, with its rock, a magnificent pile. From the top (and Cucugnan will fortify the climber with a very good local wine) you get a splendid view over the Corbières and the Black Mountain; eastward lies the sea, and southward is the line of the Pyrenees. Only one siege is on record, in the thirteenth century; it was not a castle to besiege, rather it was a "cut-and-run" stronghold, an adder in the path. Its keep is unusually fine; the hall has a great supporting pillar in the middle, bearing a groined stone roof.

Pierrepertuse, which was its strong reserve in the background, and is above Rouffiac-des-Corbières, is said to go back to Visigoth times. It was a large frontier castle, and its ruins give a good idea of the strongholds of its day. Built no doubt of its own rocks, it merges itself into its surroundings; it fills the oval space on the top of its ridge; at each end is a tower. Its outside walls stand; inside it is ruinous, though it was once a royal fortress, and was actually in military occupation till the late eighteenth century.

These two castles with the great fort at Salses (or Salces) made a strong defence line. The fort itself is later, though the Romans no doubt had some sort of strong place upon their great road. It was built by Ramirez, after the capture of the old castle by Louis XI. Students of military architecture will find it one of the best of fortresses in which to study the transition period when artillery was just becoming formidable, but when sufficient solidity of wall, with careful planning, was still proof against it. By reason of its abundant round towers and turrets, and of the pink stone of which it is built, the fort is most picturesque. Ramirez himself was present at its first siege by the French; later on it was the French who got inside, and

the Spaniards who had to attempt to reduce their own impregnable handiwork.

The history of the fort makes clear to the lay mind the real value of these castles and other strongholds. An invader was bound to invest them; you kept an army up your sleeve, and went and cut him off, if you could, from his base. The stronger the fort, the more time you had to think about it. It was a question—for the defenders—of supplies; water they had from the well you still can see, with an Oriental-looking cupola over it. Anyhow, the fort's solidity has saved it as a precious relic; it could not be pulled down.

Linking Salses with the two western castles are two other castles, one, Périllos, a bold northern outpost; the other, Opoul, nearer towards Salses, and itself flanked by a further castle, Castell Vell. Both Opoul and Vell are ruins, but Opoul still stands up boldly on its plateau, with remains of the village which once stood there. The modern village is below. This formidable array of strong places against a northern invader would be incomplete without reserves. These are Tautavel, Couchons, and further south Força Real. Tautavel, too, is a ruin; Força Real was apparently a double fort, but now is little more than *magni nominis umbra*, the mere shadow of a royal stronghold; Couchons is still solid, a fortified manor rather than a fortress, but strong enough for what was expected of it. It was there only as a last reserve.

South of the Têt are Castelnou and the Templars' fortress of Mas Déous, at the apex of the triangle whose base is the coast road through Perpignan and Elne. It is built in the open (as is the fort at Salses), and of the Templars' work only the walls remain.

But every place of importance in this part of Roussillon must needs be strong. Céret has something left of its

ramparts, and it is through its fortified gate that you enter the Rue du Commerce.

Serrabona

Castles in the Roussillon had to stand in bold and exposed sites; monasteries and abbeys, for the same reason, hid themselves away in secluded valleys, save such as—like St. Martin de Canigou—chose some inaccessible eyrie. It is not only for the splendid Romanesque of the church that the wayfarer should make his way, from Boule d'Amont, to secluded Serrabona, but for the detail of the ornamentation, which may be fantastic to those used to later work, but is at least gloriously robust, as good Romanesque always is. There is some carving of the type which we call Byzantine—a proper name if we are thinking of its influence, but we must not necessarily postulate causal connection; it was the type of Western Europe in those days as well. The grotesques are such as we find elsewhere: mere imagination running riot, with thoughts of pictures in the old bestiaries and of strange travellers' stories, perhaps Crusaders' stories, of odd foreign creatures, mixed possibly with some reminiscences of the old Alexander romances.

Usually visitors see Elne before Serrabona; it might be well to reverse the order, if it can be done. Serrabona is Spain, the south; Elne is beginning already to be northern. Serrabona did, in point of fact, belong to Spain, and some of its relics can be found in Spain, at Solsone. It was a votive offering to atone for sins committed, and it was jealously guarded from interference. It was from the first isolated—isolated it remained, and isolated it is now. Hence a certain touch of individuality not always so noticeable in monastic buildings.

See it, then, as early as you can in your wayfaring, and above all with an open mind.

CHAPTER XIII

PERPIGNAN, AND ROUND ABOUT IT

THE buildings of Perpignan are interesting in the light of their history and attractive in themselves. Apart from the Citadel, which requires a special permit for a visit, the cathedral, the church of St. Jean, the Loge, the Castillet, are relics enough for one place, and they are not all. In the Citadel, the old palace is now barrack-like indeed; but there is a fine court, with arcades, and there is a beautiful door of the chapel, in marbles; and the chapel is beautiful too, only it is encumbered and built in. The outer gate of the Citadel, with caryatids, is of 1577. On a projection of the bastion is the so-called "Sword of Charles V," who is chiefly responsible for the fortifying of Perpignan, though, owing to the increase of artillery, a new citadel had to be planned by Palia, to whom we owe the caryatid gate. I could not discover what link this long sword, fixed in the projection of the bastion, had with Charles V, but it looks very defiant and imposing. When one looks on ancient fortifications, which often proved valueless almost as soon as they were set up, and marvels at the waste of it all, one can only be reminded of Dr. Johnson's confident assertion to the unfortunate writer whose long-wrought manuscript had just lit his morning fire: "Sir" (Dr. Johnson always began "Sir" or "Madam"), "nothing is lost." At least these fortifications kept quite a lot of people busy, some in the building, some in making

money for the building, and most, no doubt, in collecting this money.

The Castillet once had a small bastion (built on to it in 1542, in the time of Charles V), which was demolished recently (it will still be seen on photographs, and perhaps postcards).

The Loge is quite charming, and would be much more so if the café awning was abolished. It is a beautiful Gothic building, built soon after 1397, as a sort of Lloyds for the Consuls of the Sea, who formed a sea tribunal. It is like the Loge at Palma in Majorca, but was built by a Perpignan native. At its top is a ship weathercock, and if I paid proper attention to the works of my predecessors I should follow the parrot description of a "ship in full sail"; but knowing my tramontane as I do, higher criticism tells me that a ship in full sail, even of stoutest wrought iron, would long ago have been blown into the middle of next century. My eyes also bear witness that the artist has put his ship under bare poles, like a wise seaman, but he has given her the fighting-top on the mainmast and a flag on fore and main masts. Moreover, unless I see crooked, the foremast has that slight forward rake which you will see, quite pronounced, in the Collioure fishing-boats. The mizen has a decided after rake. The forward rake of the fishing-boats' masts has a reason; in some way it leaves more space free for the nets. Here I should like to branch into a digression on fishing-boat rigs in the Mediterranean. Let it be said, however, that they are all of great interest, and they all have a reason. Nothing helps intelligent travel so well as the childlike habit of asking "Why?"

The cathedral is not the oldest church building in Perpignan, that is St. Jean-le-Vieux, which is next to it (on the north). Two-thirds of it are now "disaffected"; the south aisle is part of the cathedral, and contains the chapel

of Our Lady of the Correchs, or of the "ravine" where the statue was found. The statue is certainly very ancient. The "finding" is parallel with many findings of old statues, laid aside in times of persecution or civil disturbance. The image was restored about 1700, and has had to be much restored more recently. The chapel itself is perhaps as old as the tenth century. Its door, now inside, is a remarkable one; and so is the other, or south door. In the chapel of the Christ, also outside the cathedral, is a sixteenth-century crucifix of startling realism, the object of much devotion, and of a special "feet-washing" on Maunday Thursday.

The cathedral was begun when St. Jean-le-Vieux became too small for the town. The first stone was laid by King Sancho of Majorca—there is still the inscription, now on a pillar of a chapel on the north side—and the Bishop of Elne laid the second stone. It is a grandiose church of a single roof-span (as at Gerona and elsewhere in these parts). The pillars form therefore interior buttresses. A link with a church even older than Vieux-Saint-Jean is the font, which came, perhaps, originally from the church of Mallotes, which was known as Villa Gothorum; if so, the font is of Visigothic times. On the transept wall is a picture of Perpignan in the sixteenth century, representing deliverance from the plague by the prayers of St. Vincent de Paul. I should dwell longer on the various buildings of Perpignan, were it not that its neighbourhood is also so unusually rich in beautiful things that we must leave space to tell of them. The library of Perpignan has, among other things, the missal from Arles-sur-Tech. Near, or in, Perpignan, in Notre Dame, a suburb, is held a Saturday fair, where you can see a good many Catalan or gypsy types.

Salses, north of Rivesaltes, stood siege along with Perpignan in 1642. Its castle, in pink, like the Castillet, was

a formidable defence, and shows certain developments in fortification made to suit the growth of artillery. Salses is a noted wine centre, and, like Estagel, is famed for "macabeu," a white wine. Further north than Salses the country, though interesting, is hardly beautiful; but in every other direction from Perpignan it is charming. The Têt valley is an immediate attraction; it leads to Vernet and Canigou, and onwards also to Mont-Louis and Bourg Madame. At Millas, on the way, are good wines; but Millas is best known from its association with Ste Eulalie, or Ste Euloria, burnt at Elne, and buried in the cathedral of Barcelona. At Millas there is a splendid reliquary of the saint, and occasionally a mystery play in her honour is revived here.

From Millas (or from Thuir, if one goes that way) can be reached a restored castle of considerable antiquity, Castelnou or Castel 'Nou, on the Aspres, standing up magnificently bold against its mountain background. Above the castle is the Rocher de Majorque, with old fortifications.

Ille has an old gateway, but is chiefly interesting as leading to the castle of Corbières, which once belonged to the great family of Orus, a family which was clever enough to outwit Louis XI, for its members, though apparently serving the King, seem to have been at heart true to Catalan aspirations. The castle is high-pitched, as so many about here are (and, indeed, had to be); it has a solid tower, presumably filled up in later ages when mere walls were no longer cannon-proof (if so, an interesting and rare example of a step taken perhaps in panic; since a solid tower was a wasted tower, save only for what it could protect by its mere solidity). Not far from the town of Ille, on the sides of the Corbières, are some rocks in curious shapes which catch the tramontane and make a sound as

of pipe-music, called naturally enough Les Orgues. From Bouleternère one may visit the old abbey of Serrabona, with an interesting Romanesque church. This has a narthex of later date than the rest, rather oddly joined on. It has red marble columns, with finely carved capitals, carved chiefly with strange monsters. Above the narthex is a gallery. At the same time as the narthex was added the apse was pushed out eastward, and there a reredos stands, built up of fragments from elsewhere in the church. On the south side, outside, are arches, now blocked up, through which, perhaps, the upper priory buildings might be reached. Against the west wall a farm has been thrown. The gallery within is thought to have been used as the choir.

From Bouleternère the road runs to Amélie-les-Bains, by the Col de Fourtou. Not far from Vinça is Marceval, a little fortified village, with a Romanesque church.

From Marquixanes a road runs to Espira-le-Conflent, with an old chapel with some fine wood-carvings. There are good hill villages in sight of the road on both sides.

Prades is a considerable town, with a Gothic church, near which some part of the cloister of St. Michel-de-Cuxa has been rebuilt. In front of the church are some seats of marble, and these seats seem to have been parts of arches, possibly also from St. Michel-de-Cuxa. There is plenty of this rose-coloured marble about; a pretty fountain arch is in a village close by (Codalet), evidently brought there from some abbey or church. The abbey of St. Michel is in a sad state, but is busily being cleared and, to some extent, restored by the small community which now dwells there. The tower is very stately, and the apse also is dignified in ruin. Behind it is a little chapel "of the Crib," very old it seems; the nucleus of it is circular, with a central column, and the shape would almost suggest the foundations of something pre-Christian, but the date usually

given is about 1000. A Doge of Venice came here to end his days.

The door of the abbot's house is still there, despite reported attempts of some American to bargain for it. As it was a little cold when I was last there, I asked leave to lunch (on my own provision) inside, and was received in the guest-room with much courtesy, and supplied with a delectable but insidious wine from the estate—for this one makes a proper contribution in the box of the community.

From St. Michel one may proceed—if prepared—to approach Canigou; but Canigou can more conveniently be approached from Vernet. In either case, it is not, in the right season, a difficult matter; there is a chalet-hotel near the top, and it is correct to get up early and see the sun coming up right out of the Mediterranean. In winter it is a more difficult matter; but it is never a really serious ascension, while the view is probably finer than any from a more western peak.

From Prades there are other fascinating journeys to be made—to Molitz, for example, and the Col de Jau. On the way to the Pic de Madres are three lakes known as Gorchs.

Ria is a beautifully grouped place on the hill-side; there are remains of the castle of Arrid. The Counts of Ria were ancestors of the Bourbons.

Villefranche is a little town of two streets, that nearest the river being the more picturesque; it has fortifications all round, partly the work of Vauban. A fort higher up commands the entire enclosure. The church is old, and has two good doorways. Much happy time have I put in at Villefranche, chiefly wandering up and down the river valley. Corneilla, where I have more than once had to wait to get into the church, takes me to its heart. I inquire the age and number of teeth of the babies, and the old

grandmothers tell me the village scandal—among other things, of the disappearance, some time ago, of treasures of the church. A very beautiful church it is, very simple, but very complete. Its excellent door, massively protected with ironwork, and with an elaborate locking arrangement, was formerly flanked by two big trees. The difficulty about the key is that the *curé* lives at a distance, and the *garde champêtre*, who has a key, carries it off on his rounds. Inside are some treasures. What I chiefly wanted to see on my last visit was the Madonna who stands in front of the fourteenth-century retable, set up, minus two panels, on the north wall. The worthy lady who let me in, after I had vainly bribed the children to scour the country for the *garde champêtre*, when I asked for the Madonna, took me up to the high altar, and there we knelt for a time in silence. Then she broke out, "Oh! la belle Vierge!" and I looked up, and lo, it was a cheap plaster Madonna of Lourdes in her blue sash. However, I admired as in duty bound, and then found, and admired more, the real Madonna, very beautiful indeed, and also discovered, in a dark embrasure, what I was also in search of, the old wooden Madonna, with other figures, evidently from some holy sepulchre.

The view of Canigou from the mill just below the village, with the village standing out against the mountain, is superb.

From Corneilla all good Englishmen go to Vernet, Vernet des Anglais, but a little too English for my taste. The elaborate hotel at which I made rather a long stay attempted English cooking, which at the hand of English cooks is often trying, but at the hand of French cooks is terrible.

Old Vernet is most delightful. Its church is old and has treasures within; its old castle stands close by, and its streets are "tortuous" and picturesque. New Vernet is good

to stay in as a centre; there are all sorts of delightful excursions. Of these the most obvious is to St. Martin-de-Canigou, up a winding and sometimes narrow path, which ascends from Casteil. The abbey is being well restored by the Bishop of Perpignan, who desires to be buried there. As to its foundation, there is the customary picturesque legend of sin and repentance. The founder, Guifred of Ria, whose family seems to have made a "corner" in bishoprics and abbacies, retired here and died here in 1049. In the chapel of Casteil, at the foot of the path, are relics of Guifred. Oliva, Guifred's father, had ended his life peaceably in the abbey of St. Michel-de-Cuxa; Guifred did the same at St. Martin's. There is no reason for the legend of his slaying his nephew. There is no doubt something in the theory that much founding of abbeys resulted from the safe passage through the year 1000, which was thought likely to bring disaster or destruction.

Elaborate stories circle round the relics of St. Gualdoric, which later (in 1613) were to cause declaration of war between Perpignan and Villefranche. These relics of a saint who had tilled the soil were brought forth and carried to an altar near the Têt whenever rain was needed—and that was often. It seems that a part of the relics remained at Vinça, and a procession is held there still in their honour.

The vicissitudes of the abbey included an earthquake, which must have been thoroughly disagreeable at that height, and a good many political earthquakes, from which height could not save abbot or brethren. In 1783 the community came to an end. The whole story is worth telling in detail, as it is rather a typical one.[1]

A pleasant walk (in which, indeed, I lost my way for a time, but only, no doubt, through my own folly) is round

[1] Mr. Scott O'Connor, *Travels in the Pyrenees*, has told it in detail and very well.

by Fillols and to Taurineja. It is possible to cross from Vernet to the neighbouring valley of Sahorre, the town of the same name being a pleasantly situated place, with a castle close by. Further up the valley is Py, a picturesque little village.

A longer excursion (also possible from Font-Romeu and elsewhere) is to Nuria, across the border, a place of celebrated pilgrimages. Those who want to see Catalans and Spaniards as they are should venture a pilgrimage thither, but only those who do not mind "roughing it" in various ways.[1]

Ascents can be undertaken from Vernet, but of these I do not attempt descriptions. A very interesting day's walk is to Prats-de-Mollo (pronounced Pratts-de-Moyo), by the Pla de Guillem, a continuation of the walk to Sahorre and Py.

The upper Têt valley is quite entrancing, whether one goes by rail or road. The rail is a study in engineering; perhaps the chief feature is the rigid suspension bridge, rightly called after its builder, Gisclard, who perished on the day when the first train crossed it.

Leaving Villefranche, which we shall do regretfully, both for its sad and clinging memories, such as the tragedy of Inez de Llar, and because of its anise-tarts, the like of which we shall not find higher up the valley, we first reach Serdinya, with villages near, high on their hill-sites, and beyond towers of the lost castle of La Bastide, which guarded the valley. Then Olette, its houses looking right down upon the Têt, and off the road to the left, Canaveilles, a bathing resort, while a little further on the road is another, Thuès-les-Bains, whose waters, travellers will wish to know, are rich in baregine. At Fontpédrouse is the

[1] M. E. Brousse in *La Cerdagne Française* gives a helpful description.

electric power station which drives the trains from Perpignan to Villefranche. From Thuès, through the gorges and past the lake of Carença, Nuria can be reached, over the Col de Noù Fonts. There are other routes: from Fontédrouse, by Prats-Balaguer, and also by the Col de Noù Fonts; or up the valleys either of the Eyne or of Llo. For this expedition one should join a party. For any mountain expedition in mid-season one should be shod both for dry and wet snow, and wet snow is the most penetrating of wet things (carry a change of socks and inner soles); and one must be prepared for most things. At Nuria the chief peculiarity is the round kitchen, where, at a fire in the centre, the pilgrims cook their food. As you enter it you must bring in a stock of the wood which you will find lying about. Sleep is not altogether likely. In the church is the celebrated image of Our Lady, "found," as so many of these images are said to have been, in a grotto. A bell was there also, and it is said to bear the date of its founding, 618. But more important than the bell, which still rings for the Masses, is the cooking-pot, thought to be that of St. Gilles himself, into which (it is fixed in the church), if you have a headache, you must insert your head entire. There is now a new church, and a real road to Caralp, for those who take that way.

From Fontpédrouse one goes on to Mont-Louis, and then on to Font-Romeu, both of which I have already mentioned. Mont-Louis, no longer garrisoned, is a cool summer dwelling-place; Font-Romeu, besides being a place of picturesque pilgrimages, has a magnificent hotel, and both places are marvellous centres for the Cerdagne valley or for the heights around, whether in summer or winter.

Just off Mont-Louis, southward, is the village of Planès, remarkable for its triangular church, probably a fifteenth-

century "freak"; but some place its foundations, at least, very early, and even hint at Saracen influence. On this church the reputation of many a member of local Pickwick Clubs has foundered. It is as unwise to theorize about it as on Shakespeare's sonnets. Nevertheless . . . The church is really triangular, and the triangle is equilateral (this suggests, of course, that it was built as an emblem of the Trinity). But the addition of apses rather obscures the outward shape. Everything is, naturally, in triads: three supporting angular piers, three large arches, and three small ones. The material and construction are rude. The thirteenth century, as far as construction goes, seems a likely date; but the shape leaves all the faculty of archæologists guessing. One writer declares roundly (if we may so put it) that the church is not triangular, but "enneagonal," or nine-sided. Another compares Ste Croix-de-Montmajour, with whose exterior at least I do not see much agreement. Being, however, cautious of my reputation, I must not adventure further, save to note that M. Brousse points out that, as a church, it is small even for its small village and hamlets, and therefore it may possibly have been some sort of fort. Yes; but why, after all, the triangle?

But we must not linger longer in the Têt valley. The Tech awaits us, and on the way to the Tech is Elne, the ancient Illiberis, but named later after Ste Hélène, mother of Constantine. It is a deserted little place, unless you visit it (as I have done) on some feast-day. Elne is double: there is a lower and upper town. The cathedral is rather dark and not particularly impressive within, but none the less is of good Romanesque work, with nave and two aisles. Perhaps its absence of triforium makes it seem heavy. As one goes in there is a fine holy-water basin, and the guide of the cloister has a pleasing way of presenting you with an acanthus leaf, with which you may compare the acan-

thus carving upon it. In Ste Agnes' Chapel are curious paintings, perhaps Spanish; but it is dangerous here to distinguish between French and Spanish, when either influence may be felt on either side of the border. Many of the ancient treasures (including an early silver altar) were lost to the cathedral in times of poverty. Outside, the building is really imposing. It has two towers, the larger one Romanesque, heavily built, as for defence; the smaller is of brick, and has been rebuilt. At the end of the apse is the relic of an earlier apse (possibly as early as the tenth century). The apse stands well out on a level platform, from which is a fine view. As for the cloister, it is one of the wonders of France. To compare it with other celebrated cloisters (as that of St. Trophime at Arles) is waste time. It is of its own kind, and of unusual beauty and, what is so interesting in Romanesque, grace. The slender columns are of a single piece, and of local marble (from Céret). As the cloister now is (for it suffered from cruel destructions), it is pure Romanesque on the side next the cathedral only, and is connected with it by a beautiful marble door. The east arcade is fourteenth century, and the vaultings form an excellent study, the dates of each differing, as a mere glimpse will show. One climbs up to see a marvellous view, and at the same time traces of the upper story of the cloister can be made out. The sculpture of the west arcade shows an interesting blend of Romanesque and Gothic. There is variety in the shapes of the shafts, and endless variety in the designs of the capitals; every one of these, both from the cloister side and from the garden side, deserves careful and affectionate study. In the cloister are two excellent recumbent figures of bishops, and one or two other sculptures, and a sarcophagus, richly carved, have been brought in. The inscription over the tomb of Bishop Jorda is one of those little *jeux d'esprit* which

delighted the mediæval epigrammatist. It runs thus (some letters are rather difficult to make out):—

Gulielmus iacet hic Jordanus pastor ovil
Elne, quem inventus plebs plangit et ordo senil
Urbis et orbis honor sed nunc dolor urbis et orb
Pro quo tota flet urbs cui totus condolet orb
Crastina lux rapit hunc assunta matre potent
Bis vii demptis annis de mille decent

} is

The Latinity and scansion are not unimpeachable.

Elne is a place to study. Fortunately one can study the outside of the cathedral—a very fine view, the best grouping of the towers I was able to get—while having lunch in the back room of the hotel (turn right twice, on emerging from the old town); they gave me an excellent lunch. If travellers are hurrying through Elne (as no one should) they had best ask about lunch before visiting the cloister, since the Tech valley train goes soon after midday.

The great industry of Sorède, reached from Palau, is a remarkable example of adaptation—of a kind, however, to which one becomes accustomed in France. They do study these things, and they do specialize in a very wonderful degree. In our own country, we get cream from Devonshire, plums (if there are any) from Pershore and Evesham, cider from Hereford; but a very large part of the country is given up to what looks like elementary omniculture, everybody growing a little of everything. France does understand specialization—witness the little village, one of whose inhabitants remarked to the visitor, waving a generous hand about the country-side, "Ah! it is not beans that France will be lacking this year!" But the specialization of Sorède, that is, of the Tech valley (and it has spread into other valleys—you find it also by the Têt) is remarkable in that they have selected just what does not particularly want to grow in that particular spot, but

grows, and what is more important for the industry, grows rapidly, thanks to careful irrigation. The tree is the *micocoulier* (we call it the "nettle-tree"; the Catalan is *Madoner*), and the industry is whip-handles; the Pyrenees begin in the west with a walking-stick (the famous Basque *makila*) and finish up at Perpignan with a whip, called a *perpignan* from the place, or sometimes a *massot*, from a well-known Sorède manufacturer.

The cuttings—a little over three feet—made from the trees are carefully split, following the grain; if the tree is well and rapidly grown, the strips will twine together like leather laces. This preliminary work is done in the cottages. Then the strips go to other workers, who shape the actual handle and prepare the strips (which are continuations of the handle) according to the quality of whip-handle which is desired, or which the wood will best suit. In the best class there is a further subdivision of the strips, and they are then carefully plaited, after being plunged in boiling water or steam.

Cheaper handles are made without plaiting, but are smoothed and planed. Every variety can be turned out, and various woods may be imitated, with the help of proper tools and varnish. Other woods are imported, to satisfy tastes for the fantastic.

What will happen now? There will be mules always in the Pyrenees, but not even a Xerxes would carry a whip to beat his motor-car with. Certain it is that if people do not demand whip-handles as before, the *micocoulier* will be put to some new use, and Sorède and the Massane valley will still keep their heads above their irrigation waters.

The church at Sorède has the great peculiarity of internal buttresses with a passage way through them. It is interesting to note how, when buttresses were becoming necessary, the disposal of them seems to have exercised the builders.

COLLIOURE

In the other church, over the door, is a dated Romanesque sculpture of 1020. Not far off is the castle of Ultrera, only a relic, but a fine one, on the Albères: one of the many fortresses guarding the road by the coast. The height on which it stands rises abruptly, and castle and mountain make a wonderful blending of loneliness and power.

If you walk along the coast—and it is the best way to see it—choose your route, whether northward or southward, as the tramontane does or does not blow. Never attempt to walk against it.

The coast places begin with Argelès, with a long stretch of beach (though a little distance from the town). It does not seem altogether to invite the passing tourist, but perhaps is none the worse for that. There is, of course, a restaurant on the beach.

But what shall we say of Collioure? Italian, one might suggest; and that is true, if colour means Italian. It is of course thoroughly French-Mediterranean, but very good at that. On the north side rises magnificently the great wall where stood the castle of the Templars—all "Vaubanized." This wall, built no doubt for fortification, but admirable to ward off the tramontane, is emphatically the feature of Collioure, but were it ugliness and banality personified, one would still bless it for a "sweet and lovely wall" when one wants shelter and sunshine. Now only a fishing village, Collioure was once a port for the coming in and going out of argosies. Its church has a round tower, and beyond it is the island on which is St. Vincent's Chapel. The whole is most charming and picturesque, and one can lunch well at the hotel near the port.

From Collioure one can take a walk to the hermitage of Notre Dame de Consolation in a shady valley. August 16th is the great day at Collioure, the Festival of St. Vincent, when a very interesting old ceremony used to take place:

a boat brought ashore the relics of St. Vincent, and after challenge these were carried back into the church.

Port-Vendres is a contrast; it is a serious port, and large ships enter and leave it, including the Oran liners. It is an ancient port; its temple of Venus of the Sea was by the mouth of the harbour. The Greeks knew it, the Romans made much use of it. In the days of shallow-draught ships Collioure outstripped it; now Port-Vendres proudly comes into her own. The ubiquitous Vauban strengthened it with forts. A pretty statue of a fisher boy and girl, facing the sea, reminds us of the idyllic side of sea-going life.

Banyuls-sur-Mer is charming too, with a crescent-shaped bay. If you come by rail, you will find it rather a dreary walk to the sea, but you will be rewarded. If you are hungry, be Lazarus and not Dives, and make for a little hostelry by a plane-tree, which you pass on the sea-front, and you will fare well, and not expensively. Farther on (such at least is my experience) you will fare worse.

The marine observatory and laboratory at Banyuls owe their existence to the great depth of the sea round its rocky coast. Marine fauna are thus obtainable near the coast, for which elsewhere deep-sea expeditions must be equipped. The laboratory has its own fishing-vessel, and the aquarium (a great asset to the tourists) is thus kept well replenished. It is said that these great depths form convenient lurking-places for sharks, which interfere somewhat with the ordinary fishing which Banyuls carries on, chiefly among the sardines and anchovies.

Banyuls' other speciality is its grenache, much of which is exported to make various tonics and *apéritifs*. The true Banyuls wine is the result of a blend of the grenache grape —a bluish sugary grape—and the carignane, a less delicate grape, but more hardy. Even the hardiest grape, however, must be sheltered from the tramontane. Banyuls wine is

crushed and left for some days in *cuvage*; the best grenaches are obtained by prompt pressing, the "must," or first juice, not being allowed to ferment. A good grenache must have been kept long.

Those who wander about the vineyards will wonder here, as elsewhere, how so rocky and unpromising a soil (or absence of soil) produces so "liquorous" a wine. Nature, however, has her little ways, and knows how to produce vintages from stones and good from a great many things which seem most unhelpful.

Port-Bou, a picturesque fishing village, is in Spain, and one should not miss a visit to San Pedro de Roda, where there are ruins of an abbey and a castle. And, being in Spain, why not go on to Gerona, with its magnificent "single-span" cathedral, its cloister, and its host of beautiful houses, arches, and odd narrow streets?

Before, however, you leave altogether the French side, you must visit the Tech valley: Le Boulou, where the mineral waters come from, very handy so near Banyuls, whence runs the great road over the Col de Perthus, and the curious "Cluses," or narrow glens, each with its defending fort, among them the Château des Maures. Not far from here must have stood the rather bombastic monument of Pompeius' victories, and near it again an altar of Julius Cæsar.

As one approaches Céret there is the fourteenth-century bridge, above which stretches Vallespir. At Céret are old towers and remains of walls. Next comes Amélie-les-Bains, with its "Thermes" built over the old Roman foundations; a little humbler, and certainly more French, than New Vernet; certainly very beautifully situated, and likely to be warmer in winter than Vernet. After Amélie, Arles (sur Tech), a really Catalan town, with a very fine old church (of the abbey), now facing west, for so they rearranged it

in the twelfth century; it has a beautiful cloister, simple in design, but very perfect; and outside is the fifth-century sarcophagus of SS. Adbou and Sennen, which mysteriously keeps full of water (as do other tombs or sarcophagi elsewhere). From Arles or Amélie various places can be visited —Palalda, for instance, where one should go if only to see the ironwork of the church door; the church is partly rock-built, and the village itself is made of climbing streets. Or there is Montalba; and there are ascents to be made. Canigou can be reached by the Col des Cortalets; or there is the Roc de France. By following on southward from Arles one reaches the Upper Vallespir; you pass the defile of the Fou, and reach Manyaques (a strange juxtaposition); thence you can go to St. Laurent, and thence on to Coustouges, where is a remarkable church and a very fine doorway; or you can go to Prats-de-Mollo (Pratts-de-Moyo), a remarkable old fortified town, with its church high enshrined in the centre of it all (a good climb to get there). It has many treasures, but the ironwork of the door is best of all. It is becoming a great excursion centre, and has a festival on August 15th, when it is crowded to distraction. From Prats, or from La Preste, farther on, plenty of excellent excursions can be made. Prats, I must say, impressed me as one of the quaintest and most interesting places I have ever seen, and provided the holiday-makers are not obstreperous, a stay there should be entrancing.

CHAPTER XIV

WALKS AND WAYFARINGS

ALREADY, in dealing with some individual places, I have suggested short excursions on foot—where, indeed, they do not suggest themselves. But as one purpose of this book is to urge the joy of trudging, together with that study of and sympathy with the inhabitants and their ways which mere motor-touring, and certainly char-à-banc-touring, makes almost impossible, I have grouped into special chapters suggestions for walks, shorter and longer, from different centres. They are only suggestions, details will be found in the ordinary guide-books, if desired; but all that is really wanted is the Taride map, lunch, and the merest necessities for staying the night (impedimenta being dumped as convenient at the base for the time being), in case the desire arises to prolong a short excursion, or should the excursion planned be more than a day's affair. Except in thoroughly settled weather, some light waterproof is needed; thin puttees, masculine and feminine, but especially feminine, should be carried in the pockets, and boots should be for use and not beauty. These directions, childish as they may seem to the wise, are most necessary for the inept, who form, according to philosophers, a large part of our race, and are certainly to be met with very commonly on tourist tracks.

For any mountaineering, however brief, a proper kit and outfit is needed. Even though you take a funicular up to Superbagnères, in time of snow, lunch there heavily,

and sink into the funicular again, you will need proper boots, and perhaps puttees, if you are not to lunch and descend in wet feet. Much more therefore is the kit so wisely detailed by Mr. Belloc necessary when you are going to meet no funicular and no luxus-hotel at the top of it. A delightful walk to Font-Romeu, long before the season, was spoiled for me, despite the views, because I had prepared for snowless roads and for crisp snow, but had not thought of that horrid limbo just between the two, where you sink over the ankles into a vile *malebolge* of muddy slush. That was my own fault, but let others profit by it.

In France a road is a road; but there are not the numerous little odd footpaths which we rightly or wrongly use so much in our own country. Where you see a *sentier* or *sentier muletier* marked, all is well; by the *gaves*, or on the mountain slopes, you may ramble free; but you cannot, as a rule, be as aloof and apart as in an English country ramble. "Property is theft" may have been the motto of the French Revolution, but they have changed all that now. Property is very precious, especially to the small proprietor, and you must respect it most reverently. There is the compensation that in France you do not meet the furious farmer with a hayfork, or the more furious heifer of which some kindly yokel warns you that "she ain't over-partic'lar." No; save on the sides of *gaves* (and not always then) and on mountain-sides, as aforesaid, you must stick to the dotted lines of your Taride.

I omit in these chapters the larger centres, the surroundings of which I have in part mentioned elsewhere. Moreover, little local guide-books and special maps can nearly always be had there.

The coast excursions (on the west) need no special notes. Your wanderings will be bounded, on one side at least, by the sea.

From St. Jean-de-Luz, an obvious centre with which to begin, the most obvious inland walk is to or towards Ascain up the right bank of the Nivelle. But this walk can be combined with others, since one may return either on the right bank, by St. Pée, and back by the old road, skirting the Bois de Fagossou, or on the left of the river, direct from Olhette, or, carrying on past Jolimont and Urrugne, by the Château d'Ortubie into Ciboure. The inland valleys, so near the coast-line, are a charming reward for the tramp, and there are excellent Basque houses to see and study on the way.

Farther on, by the Olhette road, or through the valley of Herboure, to the west, the frontier may be reached at the Col d'Insola (a *pavé* most of the way), or at the Col d'Ibardin, a humble pass of 300 metres, but with a capital view of the Basque country generally; while a still better view can be had by ascending Mont de la Baïonnette.

To the north there is a pleasant round by St. Pée and then through the Bois d'Ustaritz; the walk can then be varied at will, according as the walker desires to go more northward or less. He may make for Arcangues, Bassussarry, villages of no very special note, save that Arcangues has historical associations from the Peninsular War, and in all these villages (Arboure included) are to be found the peculiar Basque tombs. One may return by Ahetze, which possesses a fine "carillon" processional cross, of Renaissance (probably Early Renaissance) date.

The grottos of Sare are within reasonable distance from St. Jean for very good walkers: a matter of thirty-five kilometres there and back. Part of the journey (and this is true of other excursions too) may be made by tram. Except in very early or late season, it cannot be urged too much that intending walkers should start quite early in the day, and get a good midday rest when they halt for lunch.

The Sare Grottos (known also as the Grotte de Lesia, or the Trou d'Urioa) are about five kilometres south of Sare, itself an interesting little Basque village, which one can reach from Ascain by the Col (and chapel) of St. Ignace. In the grottos (where, one need hardly remark, one may lunch) is a lake, across which one is ferried. Those who take the tram to St. Ignace or to Sare can reasonably go back by Espelette, and perhaps also Cambo, which belong, however, more strictly to the Bayonne area of excursions.

Though I omit most of the coast expeditions, I must warmly recommend that to Pasajes, on the way to San Sebastian. The only trouble is that the Pasajes launch does not always run when one expects and desires it to do so. Boats can, however, be hired. It is a charming, quaint little seaport, with a narrow sea-entrance and a fort to guard it. At San Juan, on the left, is the villa of Victor Hugo, who, with Pierre Loti at Hendaye and Edmond Rostand at Cambo, completes a famous triad of literary lovers of the Basque country.

While the Pyrenees, for the purposes of the present work, must be held strictly to end where they touch the Bay of Biscay, the range really runs on through the north of Spain: and this will justify the insertion of a well-known tour, too long for most people on foot, which is commonly taken from San Sebastian, to S. Ignacio de Loyola. The "Holy House" is reached from Azcoïtia. It is a portion of Loyola's house, and the room where he was born is shown. A stained-glass window shows him wounded at Pamplona, and the little chapel above is where his conversion took place.

The church was built in the late seventeenth century by Marie d'Autriche, nearly two hundred years after the saint's conversion, which is celebrated yearly by its festival on the last day of July.

Oñate and Notre Dame d'Aranzazu are farther south.

Oñate has a famous cloister—to say nothing of a university; and Aranzazu has a most picturesquely situated convent and basilica, famous for its miraculous statue.

Hendaye is naturally a good taking-off place for Fontarabia, or for the Bidassoa, along whose left bank lies a road by which Elizondo may be reached, through Vera and Sumbilla. Or one may reach Vera by the Col d'Ibardin, and then proceed by Sumbilla. Round Sumbilla and Elizondo trout-fishing is to be found. Elizondo itself is of much interest, and its valley (Baztan) was once that unusual political combination, an aristocratic republic. From Elizondo, Pampeluna may be reached by autocar, or partly by autocar and partly on foot; the distance, about sixty kilometres, is too much for a day's walk, as the accommodation on the way is doubtful.

Of the more inland centres, Cambo is of a high order by reason of its position at the apex of the triangle whose base runs from Hendaye to Bayonne. On the east and south there are Hasparren, an easy walk, and Itxassou, whence the Pas de Roland can be reached without trouble, the Nive being crossed in a ferry. A longer but more interesting climb is that of Arsamendi (the path leads off down the valley from the Moulin de Laxia). Bidarray, with no special excursions near by, is a good centre for the mountains, especially for the Pic de Jarra, which separates the roads leading to St. Étienne de Baïgorry on the west and St. Jean-Pied-de-Port on the east.

St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, as its name shows, is close to the Port of Roncevaux, and is an excellent centre for a wilder type of Pyrenean country than is to be found farther west. There is the forest of Laugras to visit—the paths take a little finding, and inquiry should be made before starting.

Or the source of the Nive may be sought and found not far from Béhérobie, almost due south, in the Forêt d'Orion.

Those who do not mind sun, and do want to include in a short tour the most Basque possible names, may make through Ahaxe and Lecumberry, through Mendive, but leaving to the left Béhorléguy, to the baths of Ahusguy (the Taride map gives a red underline to baths), by the Cols Annuague and Aphanice. From Ahusguy one can continue eastward to Tardets.

Right on the frontier, and not too easy to find without guidance, is the great forest of Iraty. There is an old hunting-lodge of the Kings of Navarre just over the frontier. Working westward along the river valley one may enter the Spanish Basque valley of Ahescoa. The way to get back into France is as best one can. But a good journey is made by going eastward to Navascuès and then by the valley of Roncal by Ste Engrâce, itself a good centre for the gorges of Holçarte and of Cacoëta.

Returning for a time to the more northward line of the Pyrenean district, let us suppose ourselves at Peyrehorade, on the united *gaves* of Pau and Oloron. Quite close, indeed, at the point where these streams unite is the abbey of Sorde, dating back, here and there, to the twelfth century, but founded even earlier. Some Gallo-Roman mosaics have been preserved there, with other ancient relics. Some of the cloisters still remain.

From Orthez, farther west, is a longish walk (but there is, alas, a tram to tempt you, running all the way to Aire, a city to which, though far from the Pyrenees, I must give a good mark) to Hagetmau, which has a fine crypt, the church of which has been built over; and some thirty kilometres from Orthez is the famous old Roman town of Lescar, where Béarnais kings and queens were buried in its famous cathedral.

Now, once again on our southern line, Mauléon forms an excellent centre not only for the gorges mentioned above,

but for the various centres on the high roads, Oloron, eastwards, by a picturesque road through Barcus; or one may make a circuit north, by St. Blaise, or south by Tardets and Aramits.

Some account has already been given of the next two southward valleys (the Accous-Somport valley, where now runs a railway, opened formally, though not yet for regular traffic, at Canfranc, on the frontier, on July 18, 1928, and the Laruns-Pourtalet valley), and our next centre will be in the Argelès valley, at Pierrefitte, whence one may make for the castle of Beaucens, with a twelfth-century keep, at the foot of which is the village; or for the Lake of Isabi, returning either to Pierrefitte or to Argelès; a ruined abbey (St. Orens) lies on the route. By the Col de Tramassel one may return through Beacuens.

Gèdre or Gavarnie is the starting-point of the Spanish valley of Arazas (now a national enclosure). Those who climb may easily drop down from the Brèche de Roland and descend the valley of the Cottatuero, towered over by its splendid mountain-group; those who must keep to valleys must leave the *gave* and turn to the right towards Boucharo, thence turning left at the Pont des Navarrais. Accommodation can be had at Ordesa, and the return can be made by Torla, a little town with fine old houses, and a farm turned into a hostelry, which has a good repute.

On the Spanish side, Bielsa, also accessible by valley roads (whether through the Vallée de Pinède or by the Port de Bielsa and southward along the Rio Cinca), is a centre of remarkable valleys, of which two, Pinède and Barrosa, end in fine *cirques*, those of Bielsa and Barrosa.

Barèges may indeed have been swept, and even swept away, by its winds and avalanches, but so long as it remains where it is it must always be a very wonderful centre both for peaks and lakes. For the lakes, go where you will you

can hardly avoid them, save along the Luz Ste Marie road. Such a walk is that to St. Justin by Barzun, whence a path leads left and then right to the so-called fifth-century hermitage of the first recorded Bishop of Bigorre. From St. Justin one may turn south to Sers and rejoin the road, or return through the woods (d'Artigalas, and, nearer to Barèges, De l'Eglise). For the lakes south of the road, a path leads down from the Gaubie bridge and up the Escoubous valley to three lakes backed by the Tracens mountains, over which again (by the Col d'Aure) is a chain of larger lakes, Aumar and Aubert; while the more stalwart may push on to Lake Orrédon, with the peak and glaciers of Néouvielle to the north-west. The lakes to the north of the road are not so closely grouped; the best known, perhaps, is Lac Bleu, the one route to which runs northward from Barèges by the Pène de Pourry: the other branches off from the road leading to the Pic du Midi at the obelisk of the Duc de Nemours.

For the Pic du Midi itself either a morning start must be made or the night must be spent at the inn above Artigues, which will (perhaps) enable the tourist to catch the sunrise from the summit. In any case supplies must be carried, or purchased at the inn; the Observatory is immersed in study, and has no notion of assisting starving travellers like some Hospice of St. Bernard.

In the Arreau valley, Fabian, at the end of the made road beyond Vielle Aure, is one of the best smaller excursion centres. Thence one may reach Bielsa by the Port de Bielsa, and then work either west or east towards Gavarnie or north-east to Tramezargues. From here also one may reach the Lac d'Orrédon from the south, and thence go on to Barèges. Lake Orrédon has been tamed by a dam; but the Lac de Cap de Long is wild enough, despite a similar attempt at domestication, lying as it does among the

Néouvielle escarpments. At Aragnouet, south-west of Fabian, opens up the valley of Géla, leading towards the Cirque de Troumouse.

Between Arreau and Luchon are several small places excellently situated—especially after the eastward turn of the road at Loudervielle (where there is an inn), on either side of the Col de Peyresourde—for southward expeditions, but these are for the hardier wayfarers, since accommodation is scanty. From Oô, a little south of the route, the road, followed by a track, leads to the Lac d'Oô, the Lac Glacé, and the Lac du Portillon; of this district some account has already been given. Luchon also is a starting-point for these lakes, up the Lys valley; but as Luchon and its surroundings are separately dealt with, these short notes on some of the walks of the western range will end at this point.

As the eastern part of the range has been dealt with more fully than the western, in the hope of attracting tourists to this more charming side, the chief walks or expeditions have been given under the various centres. But a few of the lesser places will here be noted, whence it is possible to wander into less known valleys or districts.

From Sentein, which lies southward of Castillon in Ariège, convergent valleys may be explored; and Spain, for those who like to cross the frontier, is within easy reach. Past the chapel of Notre Dame d'Izard (or de l'Izard, which seems a corruption of something), then by the Lac d'Araing, the Spanish Val d'Aran may be entered by the Col d'Aouéran; or, if the snow permits, by the Port d'Urets. The more directly southward Port de la Hourquette leads to a little mining district. Almost due south of this port is the path leading to Salardu, on the way to which is the Goueil, or supposed source of the Garonne. Thence a good walker can make his way to Rialp, through Esterri, where it is

possible to stay the night; or one may go by Espot by the Port de Bonaïgue. From Rialp all is plain sailing down the Noguera Pallaresa valley. The most eastward valley of the Salat will also lead conveniently over the Port de Salau to Esterri and Rialp; beneath this port is the tunnel to connect St. Girons with Lérida. For this valley either Oust or Seix is a good place to stay; both are the meeting-points of two valleys, and Oust is on the line to Aulus, itself an excellent taking-off place, as we shall presently see.

From Seix we can cross into the Bethmale valley to the west, or climb Mont Vallier to the south-west. South-eastward we can go past the ruined castle at Pont-de-la-Tayle to the five "valleys" of Ustou, really a great amphitheatre with tiny villages hiding among the forests.

Spain is entered by the Port d'Ustou, whence one reaches Tirvia and Rialp. Aulus takes us to lakes, *cols*, valleys, and mountains. And it is a very good place for the true wayfarer, since (except for the return journey to Oust) all expeditions must be made on foot. But what a splendid group of walks! We are right up to the mountains; everything means climbing to the head of a valley and passing a *col*. Spain is easily accessible, more easily perhaps than by the passes just farther west. The passes here are the Port de Guilou, leading south-westward towards Tabascan and Tirvia, or, through Vicdessos, the Port de Bouet, or, through Siguer, the Port de Siguer, leading into Andorra. Nearer at hand are lakes: the three Lacs Bassiès, equally accessible from Vicdessos (there is a hut near the big lake); the Lac du Lhers, on the way, or on one of the ways, to Vicdessos; there is the Étang de Gazer, on the way towards Ustou; on the way to the Port de Guilou and Tabascan (the Port de Guilou, which is really double, is only open for a short time in the year) is the triple Cascade d'Arse.

A more mountaineering expedition, which needs more

than one day, is to the Lac d'Aubé (6,000 feet up) and to Mont Collac. From Vicdessos, through Siguer, may be reached the village of Sem, centre for the ancient Rancié mines; the miners must be born in Sem, or in one of two neighbouring villages; only those who marry a girl of one of the three villages may come in from outside. The miners have ancient privileges and customs.

Of the simpler walks about Ax-les-Thermes, that which will attract most walkers is no doubt to the castle of Lordat, or what remains of it. A road to the right of Garanou, past the chapel of Vernaux, meets the road leading from Vernaux to Lordat. There is only one path to the castle itself, where one may admire not only the ruins but a splendid view over the Ariège valley. For those who like grottos, there are those of Lombrive; the bones[1] found wherein are probably not of Albigensian martyrs, but of healthy and stalwart hunters of an earlier date; also of Bedeilhac, most easily reached from Tarascon-sur-Ariège.

Of mountain ascents there are several, some of which are not mountaineering in its fuller sense. St. Barthélémy, of about 7,000 feet, is approached through Lordat and Axiat. Serrère, on the borders of Andorra, is a longer and more serious expedition, as is also the ascent of Montcalm.

A little out of Ax is the spring of Drazet, off the Quillan road, by the Cols de Chioula and d'En-Farie. The ancient "forges"[2] of Ascou and Orlu are within easy reach for good walkers, the former on the Ascou (or Usson) road, the latter through Orgeix and the Orlu valley. Both these walks can be combined with other walks, so as to make as long a round as is desired.

For river gorges, besides the Gorges de Mérens, quite close to Ax, there is the Gorge de la Frau, some eighteen miles away. The route begins with the Col de Marmara and

[1] See page 111. [2] Ironworks.

Prades, and it is worth going on to Bélesta, whence the famous intermittent spring of Fontesorbes may be reached.

In the Oriège valley (the Oriège causes some geographical confusion by meeting the Ariège at Ax, flowing from the south-east) there are interesting wanderings to be done, especially as the lakes lie in this direction. Southward from Orgeix takes you to the Étang d'Aigue Longue; and by carrying on as far as the Forge d'Orlu and then turning southward, you may reach the larger lake, de Naguilles. Its waters are joined (through a canal) by those of the Lac de Beys. South-west of the Lac de Naguilles are two other lakes, Deroun and Tort, and just below Mont St. Barthélémy are other lakes (Lacs Noirs), which derive their sombre name from their dark reflections of the rocks which surround them.

Of the longer journeys from Ax, those up the right bank of the Ariège lead through Mérens to the Cerdagne, the Col du Jou, or (nearer at hand) the Nabre valley; those up the left bank lead in the direction of Andorra. The springs of the Ariège are near Pic Nègre d'Embalive, and the lake of Font-Nègre receives the Ariège not long after its rise, together with a second stream. From Porté the lake of Lanoux can be reached, and the Puig de Carlitte climbed. The route to Andorra by the L'Hospitalet passes by Les Escaldas.

The Andorra peaks to be climbed are numerous. The road running to Seo d'Urgel, which is, of course, somewhat frequented, leaves Andorra itself after San Julia de Loria, the last southward Andorran village.

Such are some of the possibilities of Ax-les-Thermes; it would take many seasons to exhaust them, and there is hardly any centre so good in the eastern group of the mountains. If the scenery is not quite so wild, yet in accessibility and variety of interest it may reasonably rival that around Luchon itself.

South-east from Ax, beyond the head of the Oriège valley, is Formiguères, the little capital of the Capcir, that odd formation which suggests an ancient lake-bed. It is rather a chilly and chilling spot, but one must pay somehow for these natural curiosities. From Formiguères, if anyone stays there, the lake or reservoir of the Bouillouses at the head of the Têt valley may be visited.

In taking leave of Ax (there are innumerable permutations and combinations of the few walks here suggested—and there are a good many left, which also can be permuted and combined), it may be well to warn motorists that they should inquire before starting on any of the less obvious excursions. All roads are not, in the latter stages, "motorable" even if *carossable*, and some are not even *carossable*.

The walks round Prades, Vernet, and Amélie-les-Bains have been dealt with in their proper place. But a word will be wise about Prats-de-Mollo, whence besides other rather wilder spots (the upper valley of the Tech, for example) one may reach Camprodou, past the ruined chapel of Ste Marguerite and the Col d'Arrès. One may take mules, but it is not an excessive walk, and there is a *fonda* at the end of it. The climb to the frontier is stiff; from the Col you look back on the expanse of Pla Guillem and the sides of Canigou. Mollo ("Mo-yo") is a little village off the path which descends into Spain; Camprodou itself is at the end of its valley. It has an ancient bridge and monastery, and its houses have the glorious coloured tiles of northern Spain. From Camprodou, following the Têt valley, north-eastern Spain lies open to you; you may make eastward to Gerona, with its splendid one-span cathedral and glorious old houses, or you may make southward through Granellers to Barcelona and where you will.

The coast walks I have also dealt with elsewhere; the directions are simple. Go where you will, it is all glorious —so it be not during the tramontane.

CHAPTER XV

THE ROUTE DES PYRÉNÉES

TO describe fully this route, followed by the Midi Company's autocars from the end of June to the beginning of October, will mean some repetition. But some notes upon the route are necessary in order to assist intending wayfarers in planning their tour.[1]

The stages are: Biarritz to Eaux-Bonnes, lunching at St. Jean-Pied-de-Port; Eaux-Bonnes to Cauterets, lunching at Lourdes; Cauterets to Luchon, lunching at Bagnères-de-Bigorre; Luchon to Ax-les-Thermes (generally there is a whole-day halt at Luchon), lunching at St.-Girons; Ax-les-Thermes to Vernet-les-Bains, lunching at Font-Romeu (this in the "reduced" service, to July 11th or so, and again from about September 20th to the close of the season in the first week of October), or Ax-les-Thermes to Font-Romeu (in the "intensive" period from July 12th to September 19th); Font-Romeu to Carcassonne, lunching at Quillan.

The passes (*cols*) crossed are the Aubisque, between Eaux-Bonnes and Argelès; the high pass of the Tourmalet, between Luz and Ste. Marie-de-Campan; the Col d'Aspin, between Ste Marie and Arreau; the Col de Peyresourde, between Arreau and Luchon; the Col du Porter d'Aspet, between Luchon and St.-Girons; the Col de Port, between

[1] Full details will be obtained at the Office Français du Tourisme in the Haymarket.

St.-Girons and Ax-les-Thermes; the Col de Puymorens between Ax-les-Thermes and Font-Romeu.

The various peaks to right and left are: after Cambo, the Pas de Roland (right) and the Abaracacobarria, a peak which, if not of transcendent height, deserves to be mentioned *honoris et nominis causa*. Before St. Jean-Pied-de-Port is the Pic de Jarra (right); then on the southern run from Arudy are peaks to right and left; Hourcaté (1360 m.), Béon, Auzu, with the Midi d'Ossau right ahead; after Eaux-Bonnes, the Pic du Ger (right) and Du Midi d'Arrens; at Cauterets there is Vignemale to the south, and the Soum de Monne right above you; on the way to Luz you have Viscos to right and Soum Arrouy to left; at the Tourmalet pass is the isolated Pic du Midi de Bigorre, "the sentinel of the Pyrenees," to northward; in the Arreau valley and at Luchon you are right in the midst of the great peaks, with the Maladetta to the south; from St. Béat to Ax-les-Thermes you have rows of glorious peaks in the distance; and after Ax-les-Thermes you are right in the midst of them again; and at Vernet-les-Bains you are beneath the majestic Canigou.

The wise, making constant inquiries as to re-booking of places, will make constant stops, and visit (let us say), from St. Jean-Pied-de-Port, Roncevaux, with perhaps Aoitz and Pamplona; from Mauléon, Sauveterre and Salies; from Oloron-Sainte-Marie, Accous and beyond, towards the Somport; from Laruns or Eaux-Bonnes, the Ossau valley and the Pourtalet; from Cauterets, as near as they can get to Vignemale; from Luz, of course, Gavarnie; from Arreau, Vielle Aure; from Luchon, as far as they can get southward; from Castillon, Sentein, Seix, and Aulus; from Tarascon, Foix northward and Auxat southward; from Puigcerda, Andorra; from Amélie-les-Bains, Prats-de-Mollo.

Of minor places on the route, Ascain has good Basque

houses and a galleried Basque church; Espelette has excellent Basque houses; Itxassou is a complete old Basque village; at Larcevaux, where the road turns south-east again, is a church and farm in one building—as one finds, but rarely, in our own country—I remember also a curious example on the Riviera, near Cogolin; between Oloron and Arudy are two pretty and characteristic villages, Buziet and Buzy; at Aucun, between Eaux-Bonnes and Argelès, is a fine Romanesque church; the church at Pierrefitte has a machicolated tower; Ste Marie-de-Campan has a church tower with pretty turrets; and there are pretty villages on the Arreau route, and especially in the Arreau valley. After Luchon the mountains are left to the southward, and it is not till after Tarascon-sur-Ariège that we pick up the characteristic mountain villages and the charming views in the deeper valleys, with castles, such as that of Lordat, to crown the heights. At Puigcerda we touch the Cerdagne, and descend the valley of the Têt, both of which are described in the previous chapters.

The opportunity given by this great lateral route to see the Pyrenees in their summer array is much to be prized. Only I impress the wayfarer, once more, to brave the Pyrenees as early as reasonably possible in the year, so as to see them when there is plenty of snow, and also to remember that, pleasant and interesting as are the lateral passes, the right way to approach the Pyrenees is to go straight at them, north to south, as near as may be, in one enchanting valley after another.

In the Saison valley, by the more southern road, that is, up the Saison and through Tardets to St. Christau, may be seen—though they are largely off the actual roadway—a certain number of the triple clochers or façades, for they are often only façades carried up into little towers, which are generally supposed to be symbolic of the doctrine of the

Trinity. This may be so, just as this may, possibly, be the explanation of the curious church at Planès, near Mont-Louis, at the head of the Têt valley, which is almost an equilateral triangle with three apses. This church is discussed in its place; possibly its curious and certainly unusual shape arises from the exigencies of the site; it is rather roughly built, and may be as late as the fifteenth century. That triple towers might become fashionable in a certain diocese is possible enough. But we should probably go a little deeper, and a study of churches in the Western Pyrenees will illustrate by many excellent examples the passage from the useful to the ornamental, from the massive fortress church (as at Luz), through the less massive type which yet has a stout western façade, crowned with machicolations and perhaps battlements—as at Pierrefitte, near Argelès, and elsewhere—to the undefended church which sets out to be ornamental. When this stage is reached, local architects try various designs of which one may easily become popular, without any particular idea of symbolism. The village church of Gottein, easily seen from the road, gives a good example of the triple clocher.

Montory should be noted as the first Béarnais village on the route. Aramits and Arette, where one descends by a sort of toy *col*, with the customary windings, are interesting, if not striking, though Arette is a good sample of the villages of Béarn.

At Asasp (almost due south of Oloron Ste Marie) the road which runs almost due south over the Somport (once the Roman road from Lescar to Saragossa or Cæsaraugusta) is crossed. St. Christau, whence the Pic Mail Arrouy, on the right, is seen, is a bath centre, with, among others, one strong sulphur spring and an artificial lake. Thence one passes through almost plain-land, with the villages of Buziet and Buzy (both attractive in an odd, irregular way)

on the left. At Arudy the northern road is joined, ascending the Ossau valley towards Laruns. As you turn south at Arudy, the Pic Hourcaté is on your right. Izeste is worth notice because of the very narrow passages between its houses. On the left, farther on, is a striking little group of a church and cemetery and a ruined keep, both standing up well on their little hills, which jut out into the valley. I may warn intending photographers that these are not easy to assemble into a group except by working round to their right or left, which will take some little time. The village, which lies back from the church, is Castet. The whole setting and background is most charming, and in the right sense of the word characteristic.

The southward run is made on a road of a very slight, but persistent, incline, and peaks open up to right and left as you approach—Béan on the left, d'Auzu farther on, while right ahead is the du Midi d'Ossau, parting the two valleys, of which the more direct runs up to the Pic Peyregel, while the left-hand and more winding valley leads to the Pourtalet pass, with the peaks Aviel, de Maradaou, and in the distance Vignemale, on the left.

Of Bielle I have spoken elsewhere. The Ossau costumes may (though rarely) be seen here; the 15th of August and the 8th of September are good days on which to expect them. Or one may chance upon some village merrymaking —village, for Bielle is now little more, and the relics of its ancient grandeur as the capital of the "Ossau valleys" are (despite the guide-books) none too easy to find; here and there a good house can be discovered, with old arches or windows.

The "route" does not pursue the Gave d'Ossau beyond Laruns, but turns sharp left to the Col d'Aubisque, past Béas, on the left, and through Eaux-Bonnes.

Places like Eaux-Bonnes make the writing of a descriptive

work on the Pyrenees rather difficult. A writer possessed, as was Tonnellé or Russell, with the very spirit of the mountains, might indeed pour forth rapture after rapture on the mountains, their peaks, their snow, their ice; but, though the peaks differ, and the mountain views change almost as often as the sea, the raptures would soon seem to follow in a monotonous sameness. Tonnellé, indeed, Russell, and others are saved by their wonderful powers of observation. But it is not easy to be either rapturous or fresh in any description of the great thermal centres of the Pyrenees. Some writers, indeed, find them most depressing. Wild beauties of site and surroundings there are; tame beauties of parks or avenues; but the buildings themselves, whether at Eaux-Bonnes or Eaux-Chaudes, at Cauterets or at Bagnères-de-Bigorre, at Barèges or (dreadful climax) at Panticosa, are often—nay, usually—lamentable. The tall barrack-like hotel is necessary where it must be backed against a mountain, or crowded into some narrow level space; but it is indeed sad that it has not been possible to cover more ground with lowlier buildings more of the chalet order and get rid of the obvious *établissement*. The electrical-force stations one must expect to find where they are most convenient to their tamed and harnessed streams.

As far as position goes, Eaux-Bonnes is magnificent, just at the beginning of the ascent to the famous Col d'Aubisque, and with the Pic du Ger as its chief mountain glory; Gabizos, which lies nearer to the winding road of the Col, is a good second in splendour, while actually first, by a few metres, in height.

For the Col d'Aubisque itself the raptures of a Tonnellé are really needed, and the usual guide-books, anxious not to be at fault, attempt to supply them. The Col itself, once reached, opens up a remarkable view of valleys and

mountains, of which those flanking the Valentin valley form a sort of *cirque*. The nearest height is Mont Laid; Ger and Gabizos remain the chief features of the southern landscape. The valley of the l'Ouzon (Val d'Asson) runs northward, very deep and steep by the Col. There are little villages, Arbeast and Ferrières, near the valley head; and on the right hand as you look from the Col are the peaks of Bazes, and, further off, Estibette. The descent from the Col d'Aubisque is interrupted, before Aucun, by a rise towards the Col de Soulor, which in turn leads into the Azun valley, the stream of which, the Arrens, running from the walls of Balaïtous—one of the chief among Pyrenean peaks—finds its way into the Gave de Pau.

The village of Arrens is remarkable for its position and backgrounds; it has a good house or two, and a battlemented wall surrounding its church. The Romanesque church of Aucun has been mentioned elsewhere; some pretentious houses reveal that Aucun was once a capital—one of those little capital towns of isolated valleys, under their own form of government. Arras, farther on, has the remains of a fourteenth-century castle, originally guardian of the main valley. At Argelès is met the Lourdes–Cauterets road. The Midi Company's cars go up to Lourdes, and then finish their day's stage at Cauterets.

The road by which one traverses Argelès does not give the best view of the place. The older part is grouped on a hill-side, and the houses, as is usual on hill-sides, vie with one another to overtop whatever may obscure the view. They group best, for picturesqueness, from the back. Drivers of private cars along the Route des Pyrénées will always be wise to desert the main roads through the larger places (thereby avoiding police traps—each municipality having its own speed-limit, which must, approximately at least, be kept) and go slowly by the by-roads or streets. As you

THE VALLEY OF LUTOUR, CAUTERETS

approach Argelès from the north the older road bears slightly to your right on entering the main group of buildings. On the lower road a police trap may be looked for at a cross-roads (of which notice is given), and it will be no use pointing to the chars-à-banc which pass you at a rapid pace, since they either bear a charmed life or have compounded for all fines by some prepayment.

Argelès is really two places, Argelès and Gazost, and there is another Argelès, Sère-Argelès, a little to the north-west. It was the first place at which I made a prolonged stay in the Pyrenees many years ago; its natural charm is unabated, but it has grown since then, nor do I see how one could possibly stay, with any pleasure, on the Lourdes–Cauterets road. Tourists should make for the villages off the roads, and if the earlier visitors find things a trifle simple, later ones will reap the benefit. Argelès is, however, a good winter as well as summer centre, and will certainly never be seriously deserted.

Pierrefitte and its neighbourhood is spoiled by factories and power stations, just as other charming Pyrenean districts are somewhat ruined by quarries and mines (the Arreau valley, for example, or parts of the country round Canigou). But nothing can really spoil the Cauterets valley, and the eccentric hill-climbing tram really adds a touch of romance, if only of the romance of engineering. No approach to the Soum de Monné, Pic de Cabaliros, Pic de Viscos, and Vignemale (in the nearer and in the farther distance) could be anything but a joy and a wonder.

Drivers on the way to Cauterets and other places where there are tram or other lines on the roadside must be most careful to expect anything—they have an awkward way in those parts of towing, by road-lorry, a wagon or lorry on the lines (but not, I think, the other way about), and as a result both road and line are occupied. The danger is real

only when the former of the two vehicles comes round a corner towards you. I did not observe any special signal to warn the driver of a meeting car that he must pass on his wrong side. Somehow he is supposed to know.

For the town of Cauterets itself, its buildings are, I suppose, what one must expect; but it does come as a sad and prosaic bathos to a very wonderful approach.

From Pierrefitte to Luchon there is but the one road, and it is a famous and wonderful road.[1] It began originally with the need of a new route—a lateral route—to Barèges, formerly approached by the Tourmalet Pass and by nothing better, at that, than a *sentier muletier*. This road, now old, then new, was taken through Luz and so to Barèges, a total climb from Pierrefitte of about 700 metres.

We soon get Viscos on our right, and its opposite number, the Pic d'Aube, forms with it a narrow valley which Taine has honoured by a description of a storm, in which he certainly seems to have borrowed from Dante, as Tennyson in turn seems to have borrowed from Taine's account of Gavarnie in his "slow dropping veils of thinnest lawn," used of a waterfall.

Luz owes its importance to its position on a four-ways-meet of its valleys. No wonder its church, or rather the church of Sère, just before Luz, is fortified, and no wonder its own valley, so well enclosed, is a very thickly wooded and fruitful one.

All roads here—or at least the only available road—lead to Gavarnie; and this part of the route, though an essential part of the official journey, we shall not here pursue.

The Barèges valley had its outpost fortifications, of

[1] A little learning may be a dangerous thing, but a little learning in the French language will abate the terrors of this sentence (from one of the *Guides*): "C'est l'étape la plus fortement *accidentée* . . . et la plus émouvante par les vues *vertigineuses* . . . sur les vallées dans lesquelles la route *se précipite*."

which two ruined keeps remain. Barèges itself has survived many rough times, and is now anchored where best it may stay, without much opportunity for expansion, save by taking new risks. Its forest is its guardian, and its attraction lies rather in its famous waters and its excellent excursions on the heights than in its own beauty. The valley becomes bare and lonely after Barèges. The Pic du Midi de Bigorre, that strange outpost of the range, lies almost due north of the Tourmalet, as the Pic d'Espada lies south; closer still to the north the Tourmalet has its own peak, about a thousand feet higher. One is in the region of mountain desolation, and it is easy to understand for how brief a time each year this lofty and famous pass can remain open. The route from the Col, which is rather more than half-way between Luz and Ste Marie-de-Campan, runs more and more northward, through the Gripp valley, whose river, the Adour, meets the other Adour (de Séoube) at Ste Marie. The villages have some charm, but are made picturesque rather by their natural backgrounds than by the art of man.

Here, as at Argelès and at Pierrefitte, the official route runs off to include an important tourist centre; this time it runs northward through Campan to Bagnères. It is for the tourist to say whether he appreciates this departure. Bagnères is an excellent centre for walkers, as well as a pleasing spa-town for invalids, built as it is of Pyrenean marbles, and on an unusually well-drained soil. My own tastes would take me to wilder and more southern resorts.

The return journey to Ste Marie being made, the road of the Col d'Aspin is begun: another of the great lateral roads, working up to a height of about 4,500 feet, the pass itself being well wooded, while the next pass, of Peyresourde, is more open, not to say bare. Once over the Col d'Aspin, the Aure valley is opened up, one of the most charming

of the Pyrenean valleys, especially towards its head at Vielle Aure.[1] A little farther east Maladetta begins to open up. The Arreau valley is, indeed, much exploited. There are power stations and quarries and streams held up to make great dams; but the upper part, at least, is unspoiled, and should remain so till the linking up of Lannemezan with the northern railway system sets some new Luchon on the Neste d'Aure.

The Col or Port de Peyresourde is nearly as high as the Col d'Aspin, but not as interesting in itself nor so lavish in splendid views. The road turns sharp eastward just after Loudervielle, and uses the valley of streams which join the Neste d'Oô about half-way between the Col and Luchon. Before Luchon itself come first the ruined chapel of St. Pierre, and then the fine Romanesque church, and finely placed, of St. Aventin. A few kilometres of rather sharp descent, and you are in the centre of society at Luchon, a glorious place which, I may as well own, I contrive to avoid as much as possible during its season. But Luchon is certainly the Queen of the Pyrenees, if only from her regal position, to grasp which a study of Mr. Belloc's diagrams is advisable. The Pyrenees are in two parallel lines or ranges, yet not so parallel but that if produced ever so far into the Atlantic they might not meet. The southern range continues to run westward across the north of Spain, but the northern range comes half-heartedly, indeed, to an end a little south of St. Béat. It continues in outposts westward, chief of which is the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, and further examples westward are the Pène de Béon and the Pic Mail Arrouy. But for practical purposes the northern line ends north-east of Luchon, the two ranges being linked by a saddle-back along which runs the frontier line. Hence Luchon has mountains nearly all round: south-west, south,

[1] Some further account of the valley is given on pp. 93, 94.

and east, at any rate, and also has the benefit of two watersheds, and two, if not three, rows of parallel valleys. The actual corner, so to speak, is the Port de Vénasque.

The main road is therefore driven direct north, and must now continue eastward a long way from the southern range, and some considerable way from the northern range, until at length it is able to run in through the Ariège valley—yet only to be driven north-east again, down the Têt, till again a southern line is possible to the Tech valley. All the same, this route enjoys the most wonderful view of continuous peaks, till Canigou completes and crowns them all.

The description, then, of the main route from St. Béat onward will not have the interest of the earlier portion, save in these glorious peaks succeeding peaks. But it will be of interest still, and will be followed here save in so far as descriptions given in their place elsewhere make further reference unnecessary.

The northward road from Luchon follows the Pique, the usual little villages on either side of the gradually widening valley. St. Béat, itself hidden, cool in summer, is a good departure-point for the Val d'Aran. Just after leaving St. Béat on the right the Garonne is crossed—the mysterious Garonne, on whose actual origin, as on Homer's, the curious will continue to disagree. The eastern turn of the mountains precedes the St. Béat by-road; the corner peak is the Pic de Sanage, a respectable mount of over 6,000 feet. The road follows the range at a low pass, the Col des Ares, and thence runs eastward to Castillon, over the stiff, if not particularly high, Col du Porter d'Aspet. The summit of the Col opens out the great peaks of the northern range, and in especial that of Mont Vallier, which is a sort of northern outpost, where the range has been, as it were, squeezed up into a triangle. Other such mountains forming

the apices of such triangles are the Pic Rouge and the Pic du Col de Gos farther east.

At Castillon we are in the Lez valley, whose streams run from lakes at the very foot of the range. It is a charming valley, and Sentein, which is described elsewhere, is an interesting little town towards its head. The Lez and the Salat meet at St. Girons, and both valleys deserve affectionate exploring, together with the old-world Bethmale valley, which runs westward to the Lez. From St. Girons, St. Lizier will be studied. St. Girons is, in fact, a place at which to make a good halt if travelling by the Midi's cars; and if by private car, the occasion should be taken for seeing something of the beautiful country to the south.

The official route goes some way up the Salat valley, and the usual outpost castle is to be seen at Lacourt, formerly guarding the Viscounty of Couserans.

Massat, in the Arac valley, is one of those old townships where you may still see folk-costumes (one hopes many may be revived, at least by judicious encouragement, and those which survive seen more often than at present), if you are there on a great feast of Our Lady, or if you meet a wedding procession. The church to which the procession will be wending has a very beautiful Romanesque round tower, with small spire, which atones for its hideous modern west front.

The Col de Port is no great affair, and offers, nearabout at least, no very wild landscape, while the Saurat valley is domesticity itself. The Pic de l'Homme Mort by the Col shares its name with a greater peak to its south-west, at the head of the Astou valley.

A line drawn between these two Pics de l'Homme Mort (I hope this is the correct plural for this compound noun) is, to the best of my knowledge, just about the climatic dividing line of the Pyrenees. East herefrom is east and

west is west; and the Atlantic rains, which pursue you as far eastward as they dare, here, or hereabout, give up baffled.

It would be difficult to have a pleasanter, or in some ways more striking little town to enter, at the end of the rather monotonous stretch from St. Girons, than Tarascon-sur-Ariège, whence the route follows up the Ariège valley, made beautiful both by its own luxuriance and by the splendid rows of hills, soon becoming mountains, on either side, with their frowning castle remnants, of which few are more imposing than that of Lordat.

At Ax-les-Thermes we are in the real Pyrenean mountain scenery again. Pleasant hills are about, but quite near are the great peaks, and the ridge which must be crossed by the Col de Puymorens, a worthy understudy to the Tourmalet.

So far we have crossed, without perhaps being aware, two Transpyrenean railways: the Canfranc-Jaca line, opened this year, 1928, and the St. Girons-Lérida line. At Ax we can see the line which is to run to Ripoll over the frontier, and thence to Barcelona and where you will.

The road passes L'Hospitalet, a taking-off place for the Andorran valleys, and then a reasonably easy ascent to the Puymorens Pass.

As one takes the Pyrenees west to east, one cannot but be impressed by the splendid climax with which the range gloriously rushes into the sea. Canigou would redeem many weaknesses; but the Pyrenees group, if a weary Titan, is a Titan still, and finishes as majestically as does the giant Rhône, though parting its ridges, as the Rhône parts his streams, as if the sea were unworthy of their united dignity.

We are here not only well on the eastern side of the Pyrenees, but actually in the department so named. The Tour de la Cerdagne is outpost to the Cerdagne generally: the Tours de Carol, or du Petit Carol, farther on, of the

valley of the Carol, which is entered soon after Porté, not to be confused with Porta a few kilometres beyond. It is at Latour de Carol where the Cerdagne proper begins, a charming undulating expanse, rich and fruitful.

Through Entveig the road runs on to Ur, with a church whose interior is almost Spanish in decoration. Llivia is left to the left, a little town whose rather romantic history suggests that these political "freaks" are not usually very flourishing concerns. At Bourg Madame, though one is not yet in the Têt valley (the Têt comes down from the north-west through Mont-Louis) we are practically on the long straight descent, which will not end till after Vinça.

The Cerdagne and the Têt and Tech valleys are the subject of special description elsewhere. Only a few notes, which may be of interest to the mere tourist, in car or autocar, will be added, therefore, here.

Those who travel by autocar should drop off at Bourg Madame and make a special study of the Cerdagne. Those who have their own car can do so partly in their car, but must certainly shake free from the car also and penetrate into odd and primitive villages. The charm of the Cerdagne cannot be sniffed up in a moment, certainly not among the fumes of spent petrol.

Odeillo is the taking-off point for Font-Romeu, which I only know (and much appreciate) when few tourists are about. But not the presence of a thousand tourists (or whatever number its great hotel holds) can take away the glory of the position, either in summer or in winter—winter-sport winter, that is.

Mont-Louis permits humble civilians to live, at least for their summer holiday, within the walls of a fortress, and in reasonable coolness, even in summer. It is here that we meet the Têt valley, and here where everyone should make a halt to explore the upper valley. The descent of the Têt

valley is pleasant by road; but how much pleasanter, as I have descended it, by the riverside, rod in hand!

Villefranche leads to Vernet and Canigou. The waters of Vernet are thought to be adaptable for that sort of "bath and diet" cure which is practised at Royat and elsewhere. I may say that I have already practised an involuntary cure of this sort at Vernet, not from any want of amplitude in the bills of fare, but because French attempts to cook in the English way for the English palate are not successful. Whosoever is in authority at Vernet I urge to abjure international cooking, and to get chefs from Bordeaux or (better still) Périgord,[1] at least for those visitors who are not taking cures.

Vernet is the most wonderful centre, and its background of Canigou alone will always make it a great attraction.

Villefranche also I love much, and the humble station restaurant's pot-luck, like Mrs. Poyser's, may always be relied on, even by a hungry fisherman.

Prades is the departure-point for the abbey of Cuxa, against whose delicious but heady wine I have elsewhere entered a caveat.

Vinça, where the road turns south, is Prades awoken by some Prince Charming—among its old balconied houses and walls is such movement as befits a cantonal capital; Bouleternère is mediævalism asleep again. Let motorists go slowly, not only to avoid awaking this feudal relic, but so as not to miss the old windows and other interesting architectural remains.

It is from Boule d'Amont that one may approach the famous abbey of Serrabona, whose chosen solitude is now rudely broken by (let us hope) appreciative tourists.

Palalda, just north of Amélie, is another charming example

[1] Where, according to the witty authors of *La France Gastronomique*, the cooking is "*Sans beurre et sans reproche.*"

of Roussillonnais antiquity, from whose ancient tiled houses we pass to the somewhat garish Amélie.

Thence the route turns north-east, parallel with the frontier, through Céret, and so to Argelès-sur-Mer and the delightful coast, so there be no tramontane blowing, down by Port Vendres to Cerbère. Our easternmost peak is the Pic de Taillefer, a poor 1,500 feet, but still Pyrenees!

An offshoot of the Route des Pyrénées from Mont-Louis through Axat very rightly runs northward from its main line to Carcassonne, which has thus become, with Pau, Foix, and even Toulouse, an appendage of the Pyrenees. No one who has not already seen Carcassonne should by any means miss it. It is really one of the wonders of Europe, and no one can feel anything but the utmost gratitude to M. Viollet-le-Duc for restoring to us a mediæval *cité* in all its completeness. All that is wanted is the removal or alteration of such part of the modern hotel as makes a sad blot on the view from without.

The best view is probably that which most people get first, namely, as you approach the bridge from the town, where you should certainly sojourn (lunching at Auter's restaurant).

It is easy to see why Carcassonne Cité is there: it lay just on the road of the great invasions, and its geographical relation both to Rhône and Pyrenees gave it additional importance. The Aude makes a bend just at the right point.

Carcassonne's history begins fairly early. On the foundation of a Roman colony at Narbonne strong outposts became necessary, and such towns as were likely to be useful were accorded special privileges and liberties, for which the inhabitants were to "do their bit" in case of need, since the Romans always looked for their *quid pro quo*. When the Romans themselves, however, were the object of invasion

by the Goths, Carcassonne could not hold the enemy out, and it was formally handed over to them by the treaty of A.D. 439. Either then or soon after the Goths began to refortify the place, and we may see the Gothic work on the remains of the Roman walls. The Gothic (or Visigothic) towers have square bases—the Roman bases, it would seem, used again. This Gothic *cité*, following probably in the main the Roman lines, is a vague oval, as dictated by the lie of the ground. "Goths" to us somehow has come to suggest wild barbarians; but these tribes were not only not barbarian, in the strict sense, but also had kept their eyes well open on their southward trek, and readily and rapidly absorbed and improved on the Roman arts and crafts. Certainly they appreciated the splendid strategic position of Carcassonne; and when the Franks early in the sixth century tried to dislodge them in turn, they were able to drive back Clovis from their walls confessing defeat. It was from the south that these Northerners were finally scattered. The Moors, early in the eighth century, took possession of the whole neighbouring district, though they did not, apparently, add to Carcassonne's fortifications. It was in the early twelfth century when the Carcassonne of to-day, as we may term it, really began; the cathedral of St. Nazaire —at any rate its nave—was built at the very end of the eleventh century, and soon after the Count of Toulouse assisted the Viscount of Carcassonne to regain his city. Fortifications were seriously taken in hand, but in 1209 the Crusaders under De Montfort captured the city, and the famous siege by Trincavel (of which we have an ancient account) might have won it back again but for timely help from France, and St. Louis, realizing how nearly Trincavel's attempt had succeeded, caused the walls to be pushed forward and strengthened where the attack had been most dangerous. He would not permit the inhabitants

to rebuild their houses, but banished them across the Aude, where sprang up, all at once, and in neat regular lines, the present town. The completion of the fortifications of the city was largely the work of Philippe le Hardi.

Those who wish to study the *cité* thoroughly, from a military and architectural standpoint, must study Viollet-le-Duc's own account of it.[1]

The walls are double, the outer lower and more stoutly built than the inner; and this is what gives the wonderful appearance of massiveness when you see the *cité* from without. Between the walls are great open spaces or *lices*, where troops could move easily, even in mass. There were, however, other passages, protected, by which defenders might man the more threatened points. The inner walls had more towers, and more varied methods of defence, than the outer.

The church (once a cathedral) is very fine, and it has some magnificent early glass. The Count's castle is a great fortress on its own account, and represents some six centuries of building and strengthening.

The *cité* should be walked round inside and out, and it is well worth while noting each tower or *courtine* as described in the guides, if time allows, as it should be made to do. There is a great deal to observe; and though I have walked round the walls of Avila in the *mauvaises deux heures* during which one awaits a Spanish dinner, I should find it a strain to do the same at Carcassonne.

[1] Paris, Gide, 1858.

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